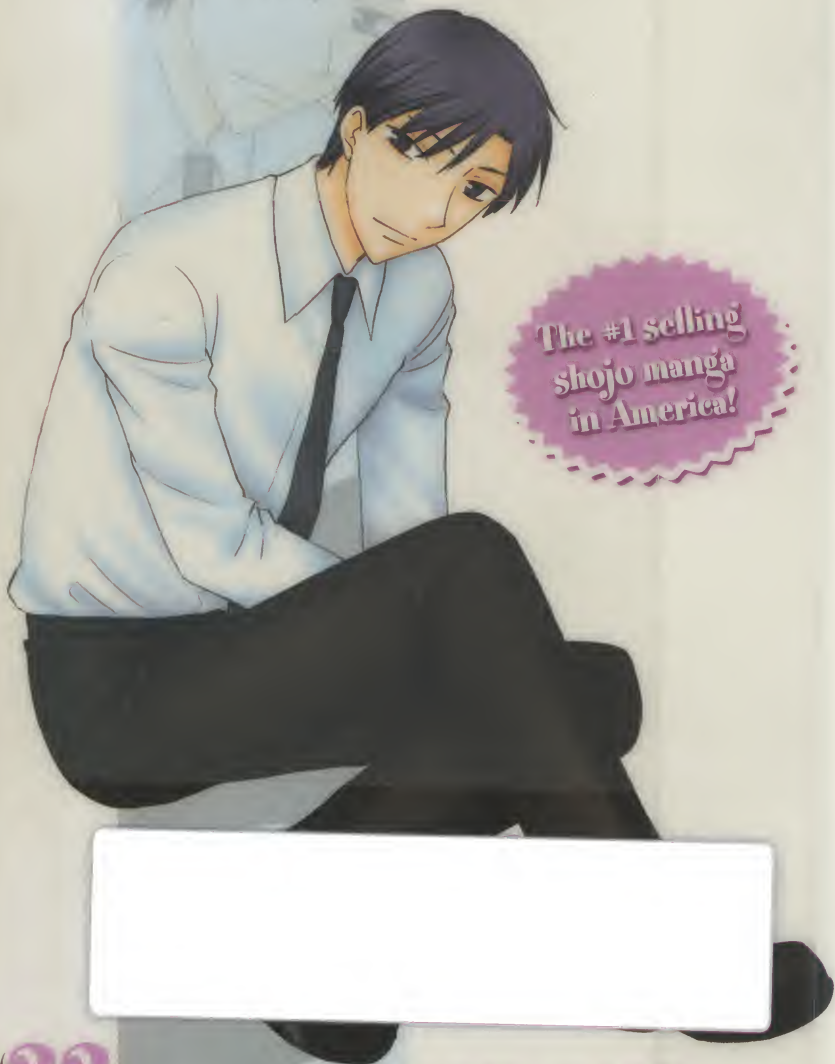


Fruits Basket™

TOKYOPOP



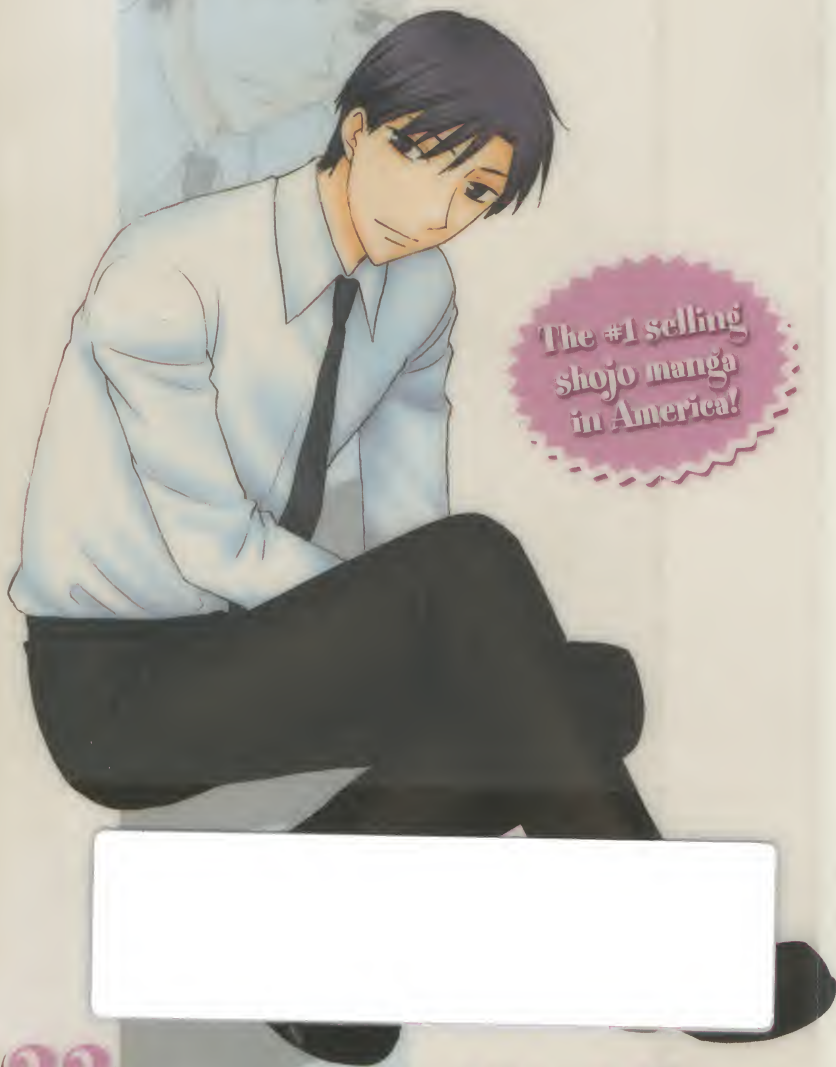
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in America!

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Natsuki Takaya

Fruits Basket

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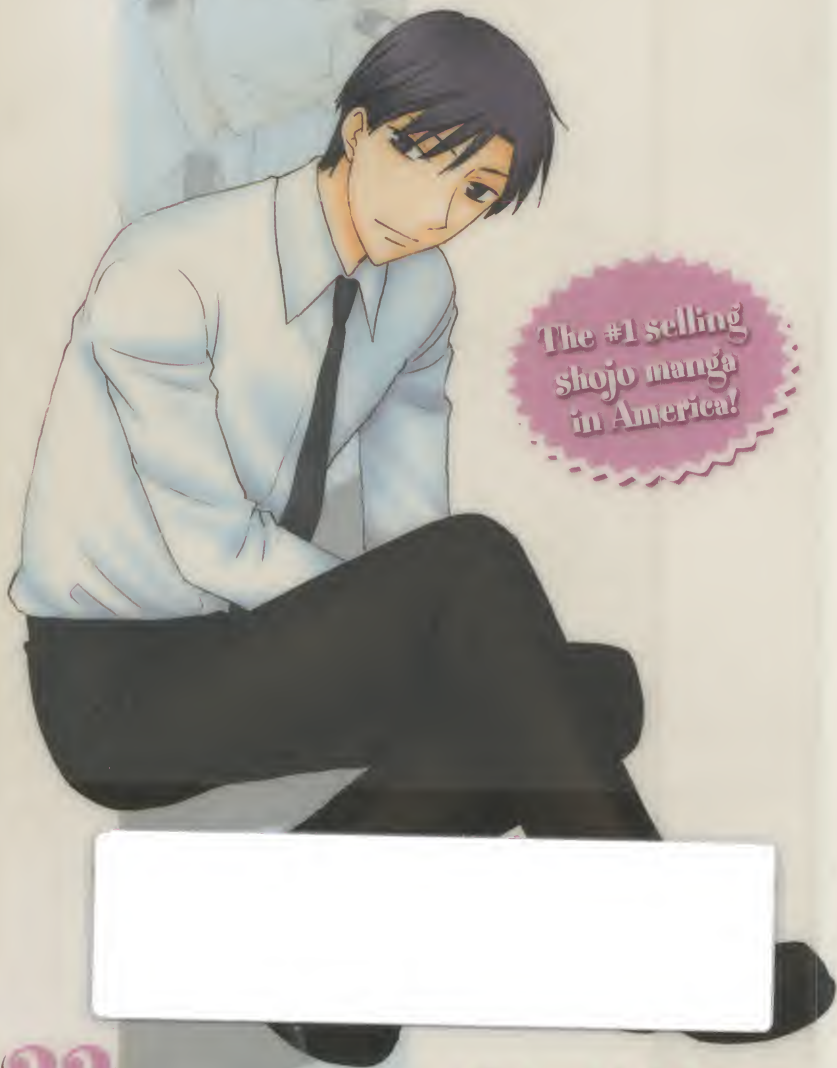
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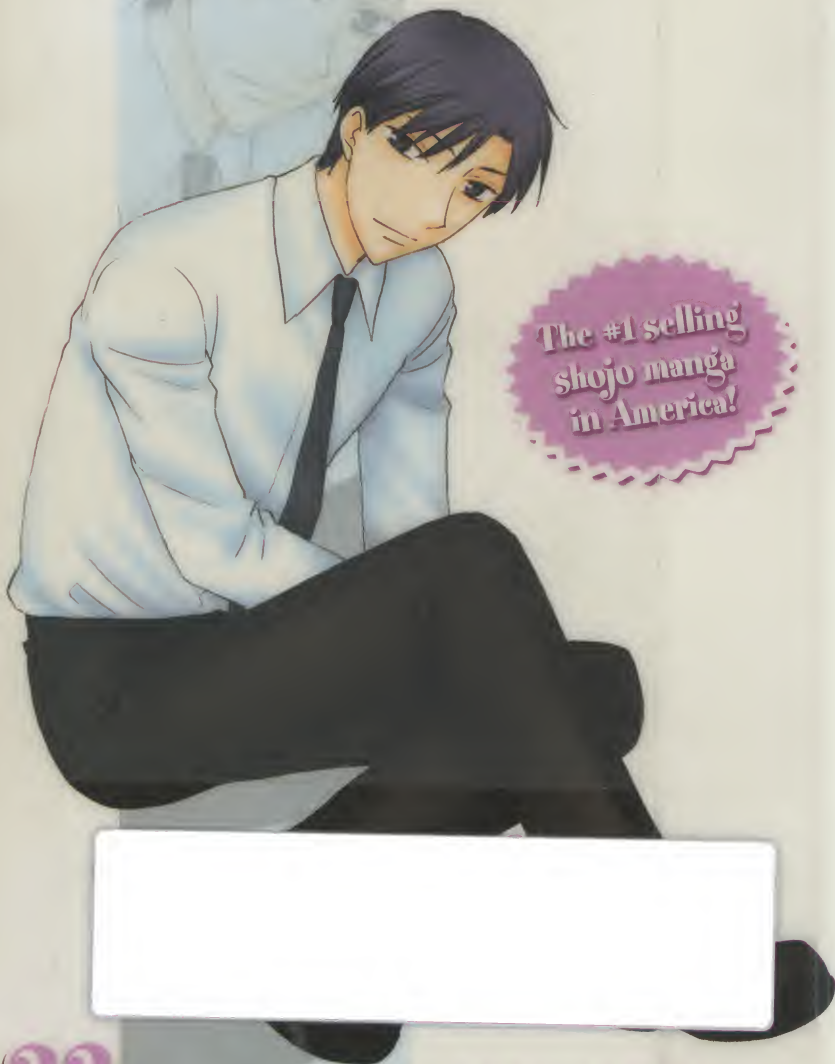
The #1 selling
shojo manga
in America!

22

Natsuki Takaya

Fruits Basket™

TOKYOPOP



The #1 selling
shojo manga
in America!

22

Natsuki Takaya

Kyo finally makes the decision to stop running from his fears and confront his birth father. But how will he react to his father's pressure to accept an unwanted truth? Meanwhile, the curse continues to loosen its hold on the members of the Zodiac, but as Akito's control over the Sohma family slips away, will the last vestiges of her sanity and reason slip away, too? With Kureno injured and Tohru in peril, Akito has come to a crossroads...



Winner of the
American Anime
Award for Best
Manga!



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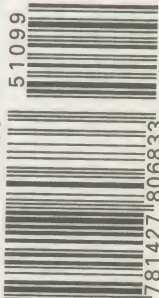
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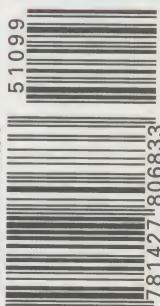
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ISBN 978-1-4278-0683-3



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Fruits Basket™

Volume 22



Natsuki Takaya

STORY SO FAR...

Hello, I'm Tohru Honda, and I have come to know a terrible secret. After the death of my mother, I was living by myself in a tent, when the Sohma family took me in. I soon learned that the Sohma family lives with a curse! Each family member is possessed by the vengeful spirit of an animal from the Chinese Zodiac. Whenever one of them becomes weak or is hugged by a member of the opposite sex, that person changes into his or her Zodiac animal!



Fruits Basket™

Table of Contents

Chapter 126	11
Chapter 127	41
Chapter 128	72
Chapter 129	105
Chapter 130	135
Chapter 131	167
Fans Basket	198

Fruits Basket Characters

Mabudachi Trio

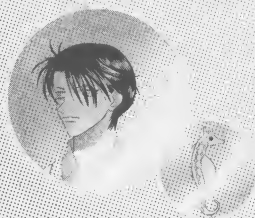


Shigure Sohma, the Dog

Enigmatic, mischievous and a little perverted. A popular novelist.

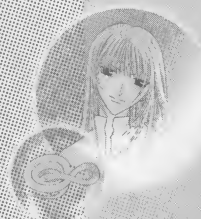
Hatori Sohma, the Dragon

Family doctor to the Sohmas. Only thing he can't cure is his broken heart.



Ayame Sohma, the Snake

Yuki's older brother. A proud and playful drama queen...er, king. Runs a costume shop.

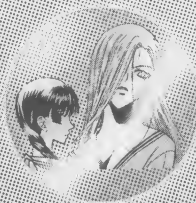


Saki Hanajima

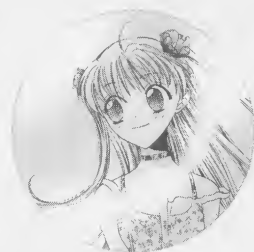
"Hana-chan." Can sense people's "waves." Goth demeanor scares her classmates.

Arisa Uotani

"Uo-chan." A tough-talking "Yankee" who looks out for her friends.



Tohru's Best Friends



Tohru Honda

The ever-optimistic heroine of our story. An orphan, she now lives in Shigure's house, along with Yuki and Kyo, and is the only person outside of the family who knows the Sohma family's curse.

Yuki Sohma, the Rat

Soft-spoken. Self-esteem issues. At school, he's called "Prince Yuki."

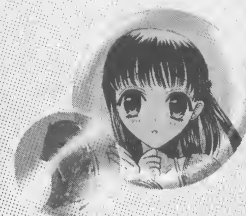


Kyo Sohma, the Cat

The Cat who was left out of the Zodiac. Hates Yuki, leeks and miso. But mostly Yuki.

Kagura Sohma, the Boar

Bashful, yet headstrong. Determined to marry Kyo, even if it kills him.



Fruits Basket Characters

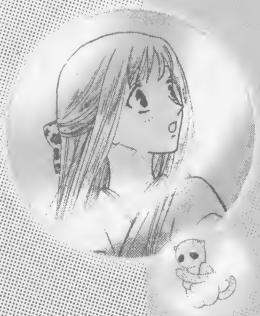
Isuzu "Rin" Sohma, the Horse

She was once in a relationship with Hatsuharu (Haru)...and Tohru leaves her rather cold. Rin is full of pride, and she can't stand the amount of deference the other Sohma family members give Akito.



Hiro Sohma, the Ram (or sheep)

This caustic tyke is skilled at throwing verbal barbs, but he has a soft spot for Kisa.



Ritsu Sohma, the Monkey

This shy, kimono-wearing member of the Sohma family is gorgeous. But this "she" is really a he!! Cross-dressing calms his nerves.

Momiji Sohma, the Rabbit

Half German. He's older than he looks. His mother rejected him because of the Sohma curse. His little sister, Momo, has been kept from him most of her life.



Kureno Sohma, the Rooster (or bird)

He is Akito's very favorite, and spends almost all of his time on the Sohma estate, tending to Akito's every desire. Kureno was born possessed by the spirit of the Bird, but his curse broke long ago...which means we've never seen him transformed. He pities Akito's loneliness, and can't bring himself to leave her.



Hatsuharu Sohma, the Ox

The nicest of guys, except when he goes "Black." Then you'd better watch out. He was once in a relationship with Rin.



Akito Sohma

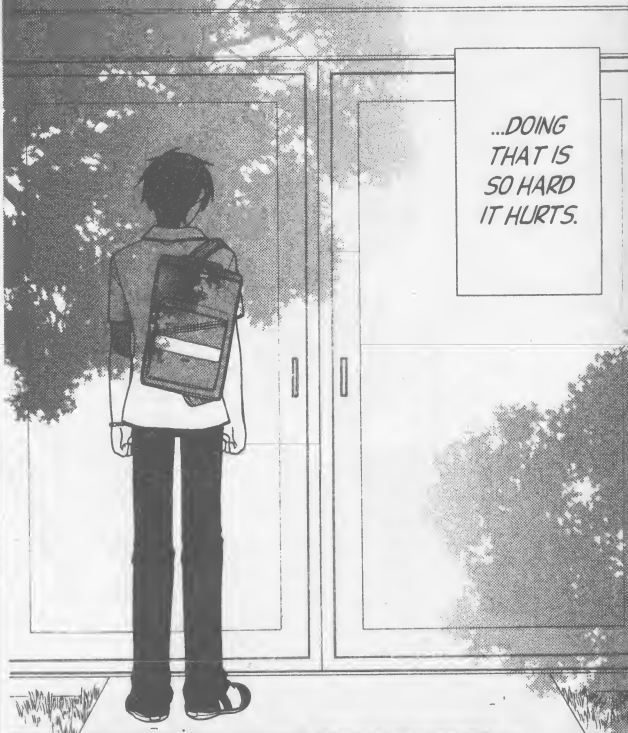
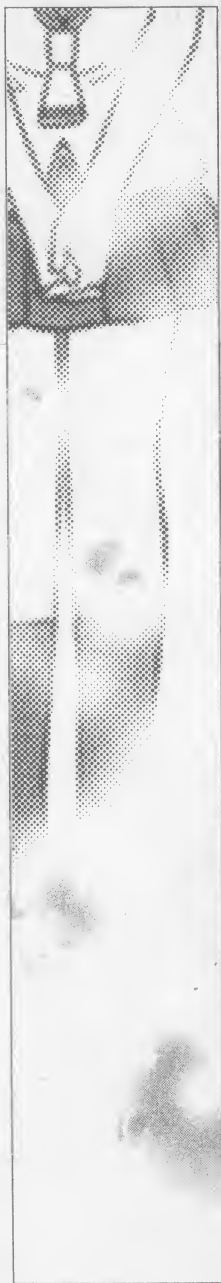
The head of the Sohma clan. A dark figure of many secrets. Treated with fear and reverence. It has recently been revealed that Akito is actually a woman!

Kisa Sohma, the Tiger

Kisa became shy and self-conscious due to constant teasing by her classmates. Yuki, who has similar insecurities, feels particularly close to Kisa.







...DOING
THAT IS
SO HARD
IT HURTS.



BUT I
MADE MY
DECISION.

TODAY'S
THE DAY
I SAY IT.

"...OKAY."

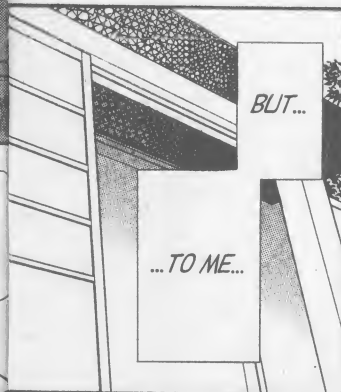
I FEEL
KINDA
SICK.

AND I'M
NOT EVEN
INSIDE MY
HOUSE
YET.



I HAVE TO
FACE WHAT
I'VE BEEN
RUNNING
FROM.

THAT'S
ALL
THERE IS
TO IT.



BUT...

...TO ME...

THE
ANSWER
TO THAT
QUESTION—
NOT JUST
THE WHAT,
BUT THE
HOW...

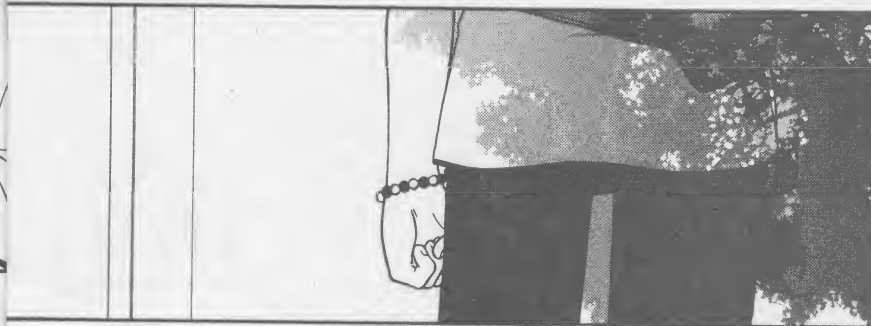
IT'S ALL
SO DAMN
SIMPLE.



"...THERE
ARE OTHER
THINGS YOU
SHOULD
BE DOING."

"AREN'T
THERE?"

IT'S SO
SIMPLE.







I FEEL SICK.

YOU'RE JUST A...

...JUST BECAUSE YOUR HAND IN IT WAS PASSIVE.

DON'T ASSUME YOU'LL BE FORGIVEN...

.....



...AND SET TO BOILING.

IT'S LIKE HATE FEAR.

SADNESS.

IT'S LIKE ALL THOSE FEELINGS WERE TOSSED INTO A POT...



...MY FAULT.

IT'S ALL...



...HA HA.



KEEP IT TOGETHER.

...FINE.

YOU'RE RIGHT.



AND WHOSE FAULT DO YOU THINK THAT IS?!

I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN FEELING VERY WELL LATELY.

I'M TAKING SOME TIME OFF.

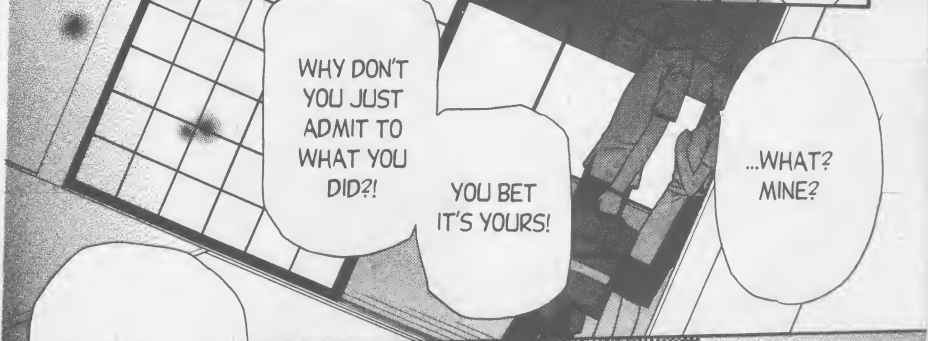
SHUT YOUR MOUTH! I WORK!

I WORK HARD, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW!

YOU NEVER DID TAKE WORK SERIOUSLY.

ARE NORMAL OFFICE WORKERS AT HOME THIS TIME OF DAY?

I JUST...



WHY DON'T YOU JUST ADMIT TO WHAT YOU DID?!

YOU BET IT'S YOURS!

...WHAT? MINE?



YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED YOUR MOTHER!



...GO IN THERE.

I WON'T...



I'M GONNA LIVE "OUTSIDE."

NO MATTER WHAT.

...TO TELL YOU THAT.

I CAME HERE...

I KNOW ...

...I'M SHAKING.



I WON'T.

HEY! YOU HEARD HIM, DIDN'T YOU?!

YOU ADMITTED TO IT! I HEARD YOU!

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

HA!

HA HA!

SO!

YOU WILL ADMIT TO IT!

CONTACT THE MAIN HOUSE!

ER...



NO.

I WON'T.

...AND WALLOW AWAY THERE FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS!

I HOPE YOU BEAR THE BURDEN OF KILLING HER...

MAKE THEM COME AND DRAG HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT!

y...

YES, SIR!



YOU
...?

I...MET
SOMEONE.

STARTING
NOW,
AND...FOR
GOOD.

AND I
WANNA
BE WITH
HER.

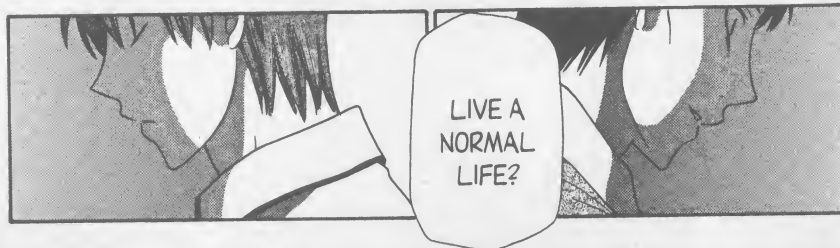


THERE'S NO
POSSIBLE
WAY...

THAT
WOULD
NEVER BE
ALLOWED.

WH-WHAT
ON EARTH
ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?

NEVER.



LIVE A
NORMAL
LIFE?



THIS
IS ALL
BECAUSE...

...YOU'RE SO
IMPORTANT
TO ME.



LOOK.

...EVEN
THOUGH I
COULDN'T DO
SOMETHING
SO SIMPLE...

...YOU DIDN'T
MAKE FUN
OF ME.

YOU
DIDN'T GET
FRUSTRATED
WITH ME.

YOU DID ALL
YOU COULD
TO SUPPORT
ME, TO CARE
FOR ME...

...TO KEEP
REACHING
OUT TO ME.


IT'S SO
OBVIOUS,
IT'S ALMOST
STUPID.

ANY
NORMAL
PERSON...

...WOULDN'T
HAVE TO
DECLARE
THINGS
EVERY
SINGLE
TIME.

THEY
WOULDN'T
HAVE TO
BE AFRAID.


BUT...



I WON'T
ALLOW
IT. I'LL
NEVER
ALLOW
IT!

DAMMIT
...!

JUST
DISAPPEAR



IS THIS
HOW
EVERYONE
GETS A
LAUGH?!

BY
THROWING
MORE MUD
ON MY
FACE?!


YOU

GAVE
BIRTH

TO

SUCH

A
CHILD.



AND IT'S
ALL
BECAUSE
YOU WERE
BORN
ON THIS
EARTH!

WHY...

...DID SHE
HAVE
TO GIVE
BIRTH TO
YOU?!



NOT
FOR
YOU!

I WON'T
ALLOW
IT!

YOU
HAVE TO
PAY FOR
WHAT
YOU'VE
DONE!

MAKE
IT UP
TO ME!

DO YOU
KNOW HOW
MUCH SHAME
I'VE HAD
TO ENDURE
BECAUSE
OF YOU?!

HOW
MUCH
MY LIFE
HAS BEEN
RUINED?!

YOU HAVE
TO PAY
ME BACK
FOR WHAT
YOU'VE
DONE!

IT'S NOT
MY FAULT!
YOU DROVE
HER TO IT!

HER
DEATH
WAS YOUR
FAULT,
NOT...

ARE YOU
TRYING TO
PUT THE
BLAME ON
ME NOW?!

NOT
MINE!

"IT'S
NOT MY
FAULT!"

IT'S ALL
YOUR
FAULT!

IT'S NOT MY
FAULT YOU
WERE BORN!
I DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING
WRONG!

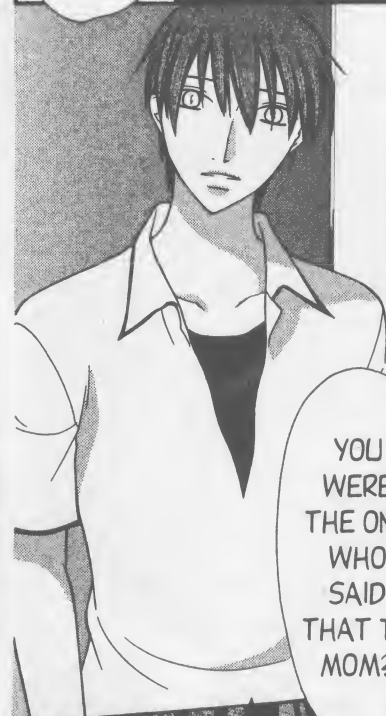
IT'S NOT
MY FAULT!
YOU
MONSTER!



IT WAS
YOU?

WAIT.

IT
WAS...

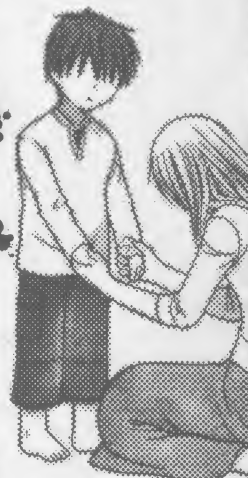


YOU
WERE
THE ONE
WHO
SAID
THAT TO
MOM?



*YOU
TWO.*

*BOTH
OF YOU.*



*JUST
DIS...*

W...

I DIDN'T WANT
YOU TO DIE.

I WANTED...

...FOR YOU TO NOT GIVE
UP ON YOURSELF...

...WHILE YOU WERE
STILL ALIVE.

MOM...

FINALLY.

I CAN
FINALLY
THINK LIKE
THAT NOW.

BUT IT'S
ALREADY
TOO LATE.

I WANTED
YOU...

...TO LIVE.



I WAS
JUST
A KID.

IT WAS
TOO HARD
FOR ME TO
UNDER-
STAND.

...LIKE "I
WOULD'VE
UNDERSTOOD
IF I'D JUST
BEEN OLDER."

AND I'M
NOT GONNA
MAKE SOME
COP-OUT
EXCUSE...

ONCE
YOU'RE
DEAD...

...YOU
CAN'T TRY
ANYTHING
ANYMORE.

YOU CAN'T
TAKE
ANYTHING
BACK.

WAS IT
HARD...

...CARRY-
ING...

...ALL
THAT
PAIN?

DID YOU
FEEL
ALONE?





NINGH!

... NN.



NO!
AAAHH!

YOU COULD
NEVER--

LET
G--

...GH.



HE'S
GOING
TO KILL
ME!

THE BOY'S
GOING TO
KILL ME...!

SOMEBODY!

SOMEBODY
HELP ME!



NO.

I WON'T...
GIVE UP ON
MYSELF.

NOT
ANYMORE.



I'M
GONNA
TRY.

WHILE
I'M STILL
ALIVE...

...I'M
GONNA
TRY TO
LIVE.

REALLY
LIVE.



HON-
ESTLY?

YES.

DO YOU
THINK HIS
FATHER
WILL
APPROVE?

...TO HAVE
THAT
ISOLATED
ROOM DE-
STROYED.

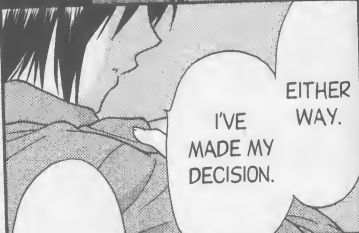
AND I'M
PLAN-
NING...

KYO IS
FREE.



YOU'VE
CHANGED...

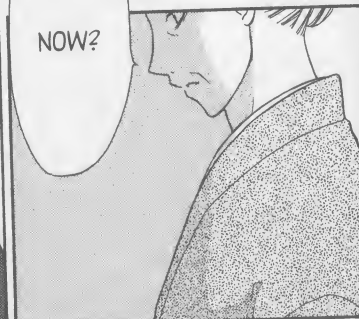
...AKITO-
SAN.



EITHER
WAY.

I'VE
MADE MY
DECISION.

NOW?



LIKE HIS
FATHER
WISHES?

SHALL
I SEND
SOMEONE
TO FETCH
HIM?

THE CAT,
I MEAN.



I'LL GO.

...NO.



...I WANT TO
TALK TO
HIS FATHER
ABOUT.

THERE'S
SOME-
THING...



HE'S GOING
TO KILL ME!
HE'S GOING
TO KILL ME!

HEY.

HE'S GOING
TO KILL
ME...!

EXCUSE
ME.



IT'S SO
SIMPLE.

...I'M
GOING
NOW.



I FINALLY
HAVE IT IN
MY HANDS.



...HARD.

THE
ANSWER,
AND THE
HOW...

...THEY'RE
BOTH SO
SIMPLE.

IT'S
JUST...

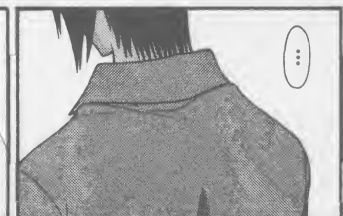


...I LIKED
YOU
BETTER
BEFORE.

AND I
MUST
SAY...



FINE.



...



BUT AS
FOR ME...

THEN STAY
WHERE
YOU ARE.

AS LONG
AS YOU
WANT.

IF I'M
GONNA GO
ON LIVING.

I GUESS
I HAVE NO
CHOICE.

I'VE
GOTTA
KEEP
GOING.

IT'S
OKAY.

REALLY.

I KNOW
THEY
WON'T.

OKAY?

NO ONE'S
GOING TO...

...HATE
YOU, HIRO-
CHAN.

BECAUSE
YOU
TALKED
TO ME
FIRST.

...I'M SO
HAPPY.

Y'KNOW?

NEVER!

I'M SURE
HIS OWN
ANSWER...

...IS SO
SIMPLE IT'S
SCARY TOO.

AND
IT'LL
NEED...

...A
TERRIFYING
AMOUNT
OF TIME.

W...

WAIT! I...

HEY!

I WON'T
ALLOW
IT!

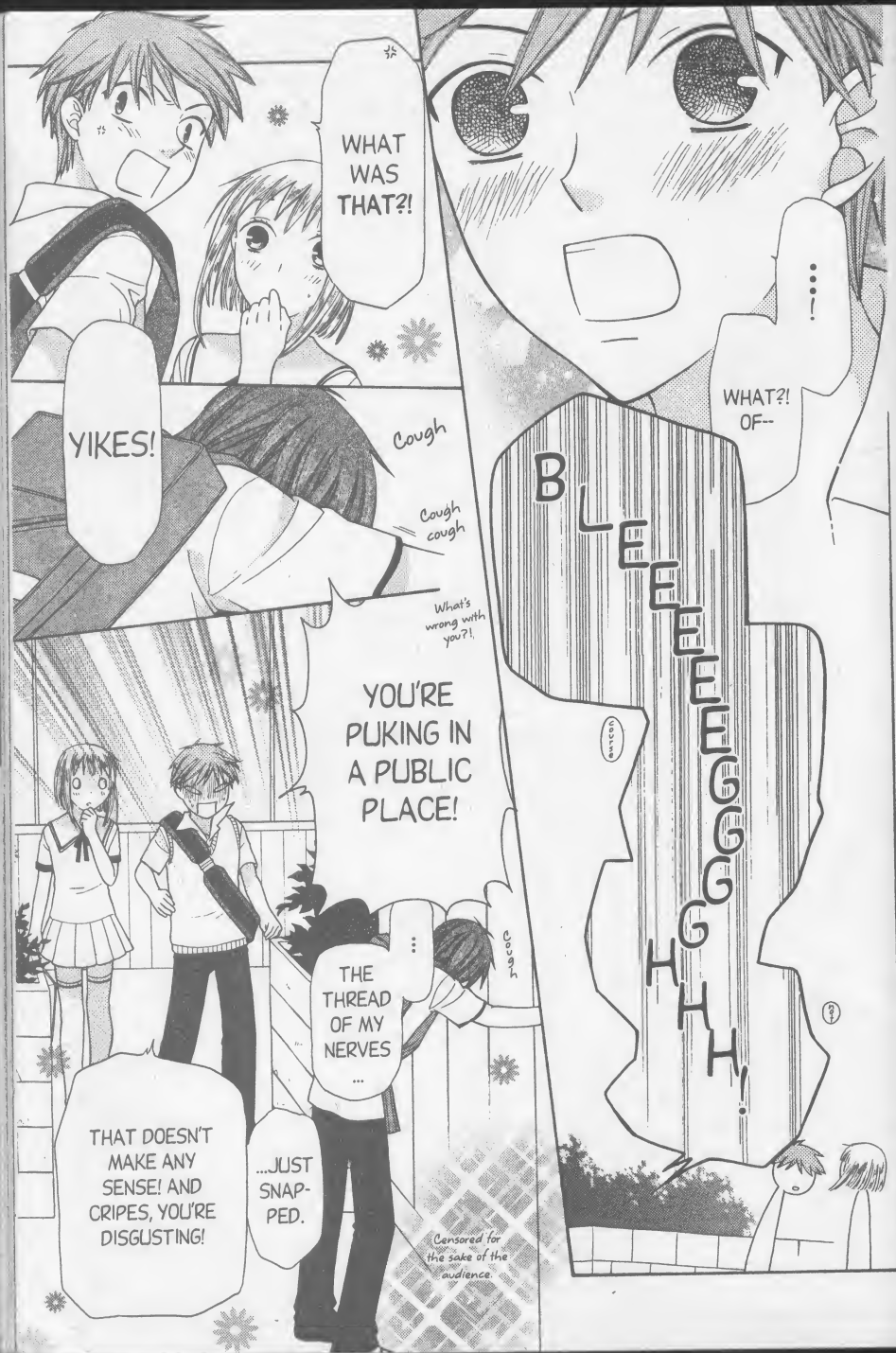
I'LL NEVER
ALLOW IT!

AND THAT'S
EXACTLY
WHY...

...IT FEELS SO
IMPORTANT.

I'LL...

...BE
BACK.





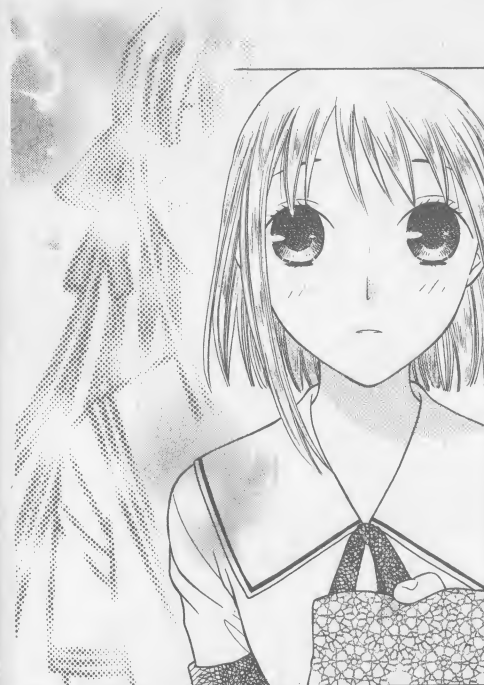
...
THANKS.



FORGET
IT—I CAN
DO IT
MYSELF.

FORGET
ABOUT
THANKING
HER AND
JUST CLEAN
UP, OKAY?

I'LL
HELP
YOU.



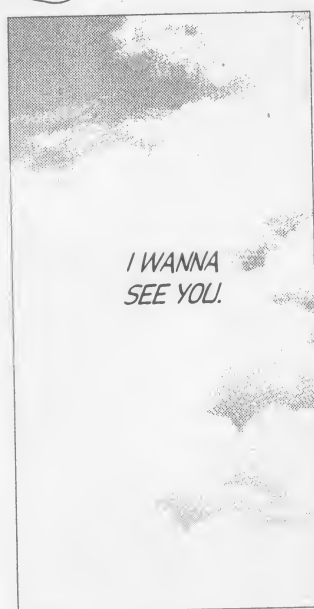
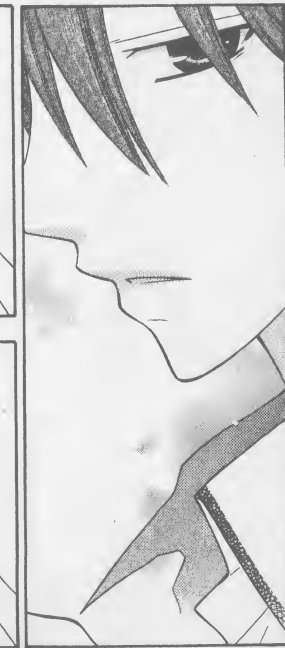
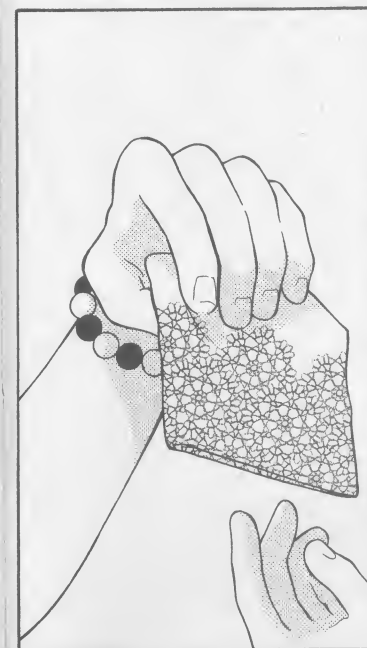
WHO
WOULDN'T,
AFTER
EMPTYING
THE TANK?!

UM...

UM...
ONII-
CHAN.



HERE.

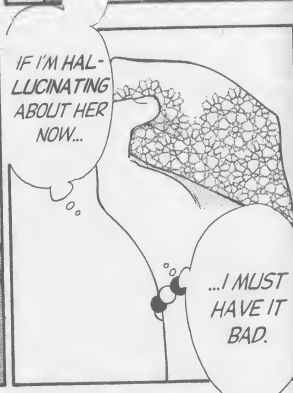


I WANNA
SEE YOU.



Let's borrow
some cleaning
supplies.

Yeah.



IF I'M HAL-
LUCINATING
ABOUT HER
NOW...

...I MUST
HAVE IT
BAD.



Chapter 127



I REALLY WANNA
SEE YOU.



WELL...

AND...

...AS ANY-ONE'S FAULT.

TOHRU-KUN DOESN'T THINK OF IT...

I HEARD.

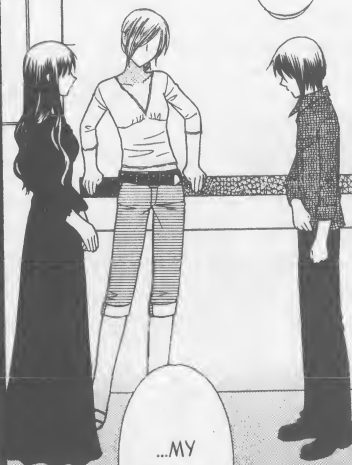


ABOUT KURENO.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S TOLD YOU.

BUT HER INJURIES.

THEY'RE ...



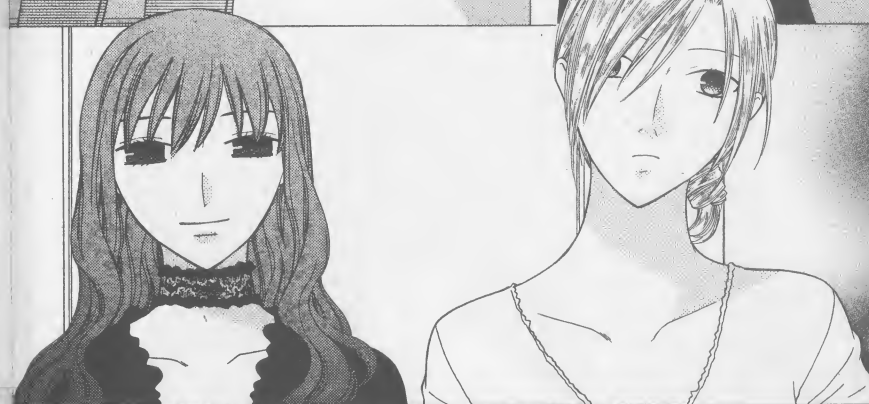
...MY FAULT.



I'D HEARD BITS OF THE STORY FROM TOHRU.

AND I MET WITH AKITO SOHMA...

...JUST THE OTHER DAY.





...W-WAIT.

.....

"WE DON'T THINK TOHRU-KUN WANTS TO SEE YOU RIGHT NOW."

THAT TRUTH.



...TO WORRY ABOUT ME.

SERIOUSLY?

SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE TIME...



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND A THING.

DO YOU, LITTLE BOY?

STILL...



BECAUSE THAT'S LOW, EVEN FOR--

WAIT, WAIT, WAIT!

MESSING WITH YOU?

ARE YOU MESSING WITH ME?



WOULD I...?

DO YOU THINK WE WOULD LIE ABOUT TOHRU-KUN'S FEELINGS...

...JUST TO TEASE YOU?



Daang doong

WELL, HE MARCHED IN HERE AND SAID HE WAS GONNA SEE TOHRU.

Like an upstanding young man.

YIKES! THAT SCARED ME.

...WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH HIM?

Fruits Basket

Nice to meet you and hello. I'm Takaya, presenting Volume 22. The cover has Tohru's Daddy on it this time around. I was going to make the color behind him white, but then he would end up looking like Atkii, so I changed it.

(It might not matter much, but in my head, Atkii has a white image.)

Now then. In the magazine, Furuba has safely reached its final chapter. The next volume will be the last graphic novel.

Sometimes people ask me if that makes me sad, but it doesn't--not really, anyway. An author never *actually* says goodbye to her works.

It's true that a manga ends, but it's something that will continue to exist inside me forever. Maybe I'm not explaining it very well? Basically, what I want to say is that I think the ones who will really be sad will be the people who have kept reading and loving Furuba.

Thank you very much. Now please enjoy Furuba Volume 22!





THINK ABOUT IT.

CAN'T YOU CUT EVERYONE A BREAK...

...AND LET HER BELONG TO ALL OF US FOR JUST A LITTLE LONGER?



WAIT.

WHEN THEY DO, YOU'LL HAVE HER ALL TO YOURSELF, ANYWAY.

THEY'RE LETTING HER OUT?



SORRY, BUT I DON'T PLAN ON EVER KNOWING THAT.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW I FEEL.

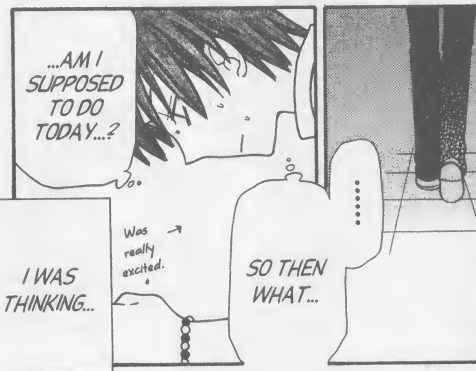
DAMMIT.

shake shake

shake

IT'S NOT CUTE.

IT'S A CUTE, SELFISH WISH.



...AM I SUPPOSED TO DO TODAY...?

I WAS THINKING...

Was really excited.

SO THEN WHAT...



SLUMP.



ANYWAY, DON'T YOU DARE COME SEE HER UNTIL SHE'S OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. IF YOU DO...

PULL OFF WHAT, I WONDER?

...I'LL PULL IT OFF!!

Tee hee hee.

Just...

WHO DIED AND MADE YOU TWO QUEENS?!

SHE'S GETTING OUT.

AND SOON.

WHY DON'T YOU PICK HER UP WHEN SHE DOES?

IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU MADE HER CRY. YOU PISS ME OFF. YOU'D BETTER DO SOME SERIOUS REFLECTION, DUMBASS!

Baldy!

NO ONE CARES ABOUT WHAT'S CONVENIENT FOR YOU, STUPID.



SO SHE IS JUST GETTING BACK AT ME.

Wha?!



WE REALLY
DO NEED HIM
TO WAIT
UNTIL SHE'S
OUT OF THE
HOSPITAL.

INDEED.



BY THE
WAY...

AREN'T
YOU GOING,
ARISA?



...

WELL...

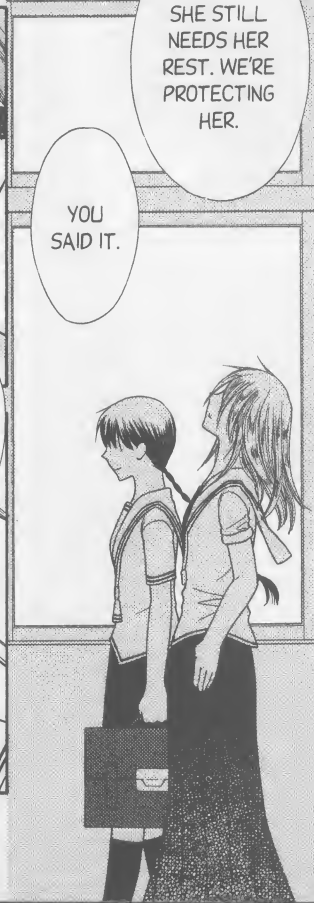
...I'M SURE
YOU'RE
WORRYING
ABOUT PLENTY
OF THINGS
RIGHT NOW.



YOU
KNOW.



TO SEE
KURENO-
SAN.



YOU
SAID IT.

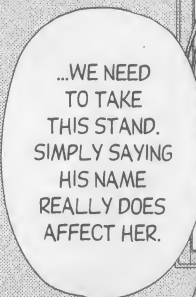
AND IF HE
CAME, SHE
WOULD
PROBABLY RUN
AWAY BEFORE
SHE EVEN
PUT ON
HER SHOES.

SHE STILL
NEEDS HER
REST. WE'RE
PROTECTING
HER.

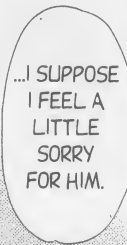
WE DON'T
WANT HER
TO CRY
ON US.



DO YOU
REALLY?
HUNH.



...WE NEED
TO TAKE
THIS STAND.
SIMPLY SAYING
HIS NAME
REALLY DOES
AFFECT HER.

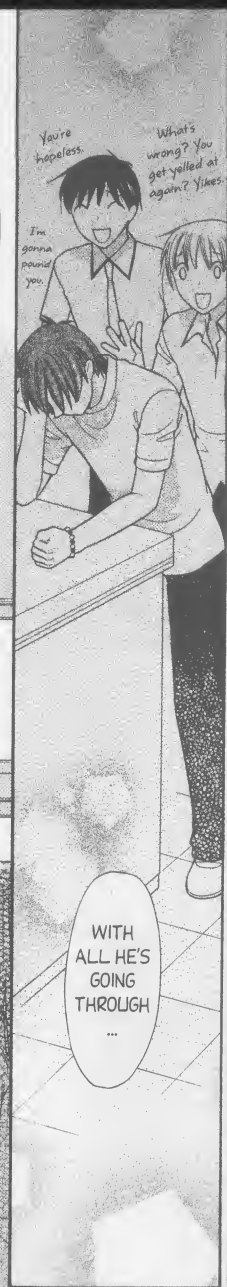


...I SUPPOSE
I FEEL A
LITTLE
SORRY
FOR HIM.



HA
HA.

AND
YET...



You're
hopeless.
I'm
gonna
pound
you.

What's
wrong? You
get yelled at
again? Yikes.

WITH
ALL HE'S
GOING
THROUGH
...

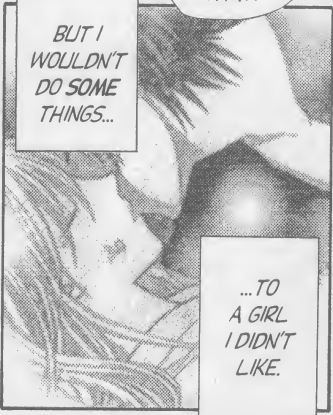


...THAT
I SHOULD
TELL
SHISHOU
ABOUT
YESTERDAY.



BUT
THIS WAS
A SHOCK.

CRAP...! I
SHOULDN'T
HAVE SAID
ANYTHING
TO GIVE HER
THE WRONG
IDEA LIKE
THAT.



BUT I
WOULDN'T
DO SOME
THINGS...

...TO
A GIRL
I DIDN'T
LIKE.



I STAB-
BED HIM.

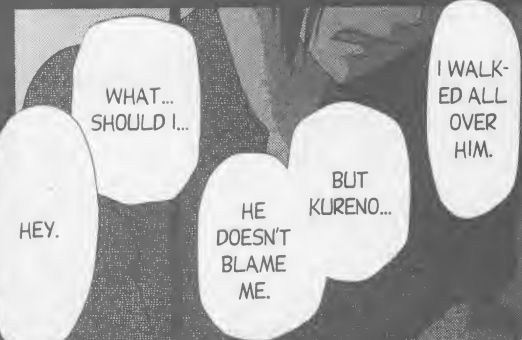
BE-
CAUSE
OF ME.

I...



...
CHAINED
HIM
DOWN.

I...



WHAT...
SHOULD I...

HEY.

HE
DOESN'T
BLAME
ME.

BUT
KURENO...

I WALK-
ED ALL
OVER
HIM.

...HE LOVED.

KURENO.

HE'S...

HE'S IN
THIS SAME
HOSPITAL.

RIGHT
NOW.



...YOU
SHOULD
SEE HIM?

BUT IF
YOU CAN
SEE HIM...

...DON'T
YOU
THINK...



I'VE BEEN
THINKING,
Y'KNOW.

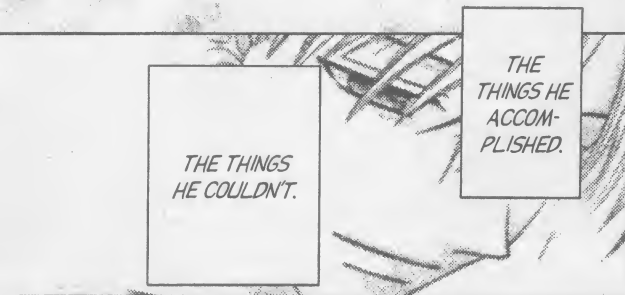
YOU'RE
PROBABLY
RIGHT.

ABOUT
KURENO-
SAN'S 26
YEARS IN
THIS WORLD.

THE THINGS...

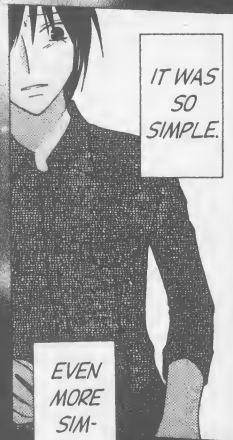
THE THINGS
HE COULDN'T.

THE
THINGS HE
ACCOM-
PLISHED.





.....!



IT WAS
SO
SIMPLE.

EVEN
MORE
SIM-
PLE...

...THAN
THAT.

SHE
WASN'T
THE ONLY
REASON...



.....



...GH.

U M :



...I WAS...

...UPSET.



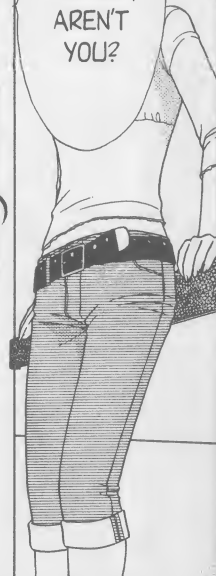
NN...



KURENO-
SAN
MENTIONED
THAT...



YOU'RE A
WOMAN,
AREN'T
YOU?

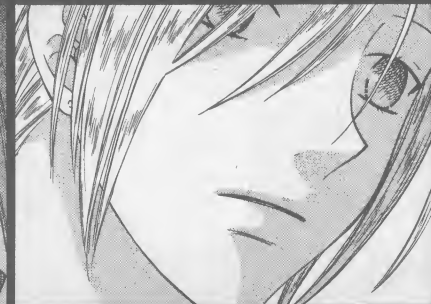


YOU'RE
THE ONE,
AREN'T
YOU?

I THINK
I SEE NOW.

...HE
HAS
TO "BE
THERE"
FOR.

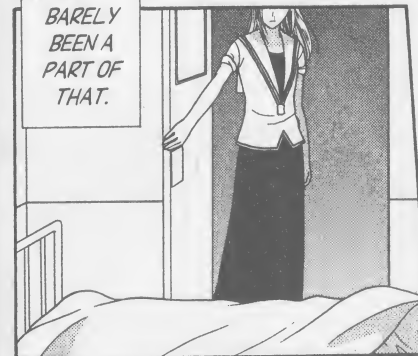
...HE HAS
SOMEONE...





KLRENO-
SAN HAD
LIVED 26
YEARS.

AND I'D
BARELY
BEEN A
PART OF
THAT.



I'D BEEN
POLISHING THE
MEMORIES OF
THAT ONE DAY
OVER AND OVER.



I THOUGHT
IT WAS
KINDA
PATHETIC.

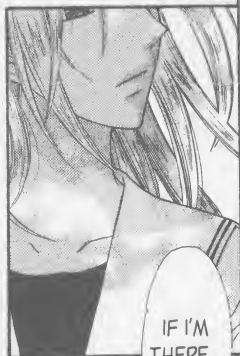


AND THAT
MORTIFIED
ME.

IT WAS THE
BASIC FACT...

...THAT I WAS
AN OUTSIDER.





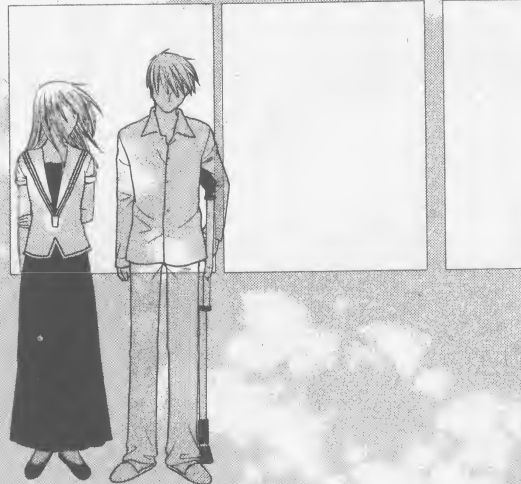
IF I'M
THERE...

...AKITO
WILL
NEVER...

...STOP
BEING
SICK AT
HEART.

UNTIL
THE END.

I HAVE TO
DISAPPEAR.



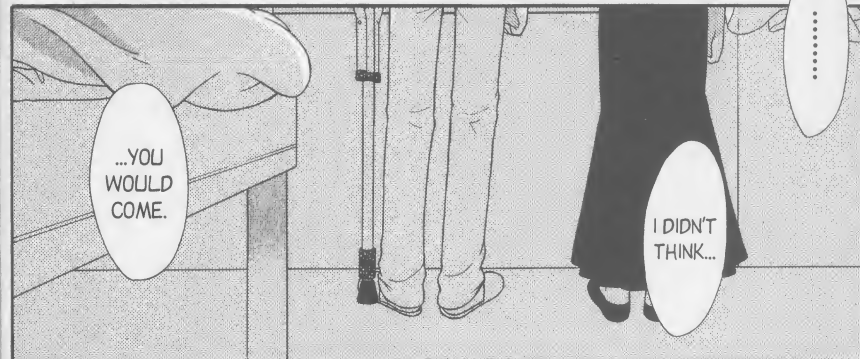
UNTIL
THE END.

THEN
GO.

CAN'T
YOU GO
ANY-
WHERE
YOU
WANT?

ITCH

ANYWHERE



...YOU
WOULD
COME.

I DIDN'T
THINK...



WHAT?



I'M NOT
DONE.

I...

THERE'S
STILL
SOMETHING
I HAVE
TO DO.

FOR
AKITO.



WHY
NOT?



WELL...

I DON'T
DESERVE
IT.



DIDN'T
YOU?

YOU
TALKED
WITH
AKITO.



I'M
NOT...

...GONNA
SAY IT.

IT'S OKAY.



I'LL GO
ANYWHERE.

HONESTLY.

AND DO
Y'KNOW
WHY?

HMPH.



WE HAVE NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT.

JUST GO ON AND...

...LIVE.

HOWEVER YOU WANT.

DOES IT MATTER?

HUH? WAIT!

I WANNA TALK TO--

WHAP



WHAT!?

...HUH?

.....



O R E E E A K

OH...?

I HATE REPEATING MYSELF, OKAY?!

I MEAN WHAT I SAID!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN--



REALLY.

RIGHT NOW, I CAN WAIT.

BUT I'M NOT GONNA BE LEFT OUT OF THINGS.



AKITO?



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THIS IS SHISHOU'S HOUSE.

WH...



NOT ANYMORE.





.....

YES.

YOU'RE RIGHT.

WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A NICE LONG TALK INSIDE?

AFTER THAT...

...A LITTLE TIME PASSED.

AND THEN KURENO-SAN REALLY DID LEAVE THE SOHMA HOME.

HE SAID...

HE DIDN'T TELL A LOT OF PEOPLE.

AND HE GOT RID OF ANYTHING HE COULDN'T CARRY WITH HIM.

...THINGS WOULD WORK OUT BETTER IF HE LEFT THINGS LIKE HE'D NEVER EVEN BEEN THERE.

AND THEN...



BUT STILL.

WE'VE CLEARED ONE OBSTACLE.



YOU DID WELL.



WELL.

CORRECTING THE TWISTED ATTITUDES OF YOUR FATHER...

...AND THE PEOPLE AT THE MAIN HOUSE...

...PROBABLY WON'T BE QUITE THAT SIMPLE.



...GOING
ANY-
WHERE.

I'M NOT...

WHO
CARES IF
I'M OKAY?
I LIKE IT
HERE.

LOOKING
FOR A JOB
IN THE
MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE
LIKE THIS...



I WANT
YOU...

...TO SAY
IT.

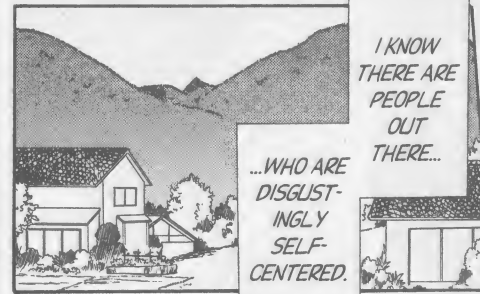
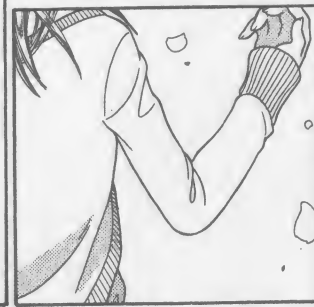


I'M NOT
GONNA
SAY IT.

...
WHY?

HM?

SAY IT.



I KNOW
THERE ARE
PEOPLE
OUT
THERE...

...WHO ARE
DISGUST-
INGLY
SELF-
CENTERED.



BUT I THINK
IT'S OKAY FOR
SOME PEOPLE
TO BE THE
OPPOSITE.

TO ALWAYS
PUT THEM-
SELVES LAST.



THAT'S NOT
SO BAD.



ARE YOU
SURE...
YOU'RE OKAY
WITH THIS?



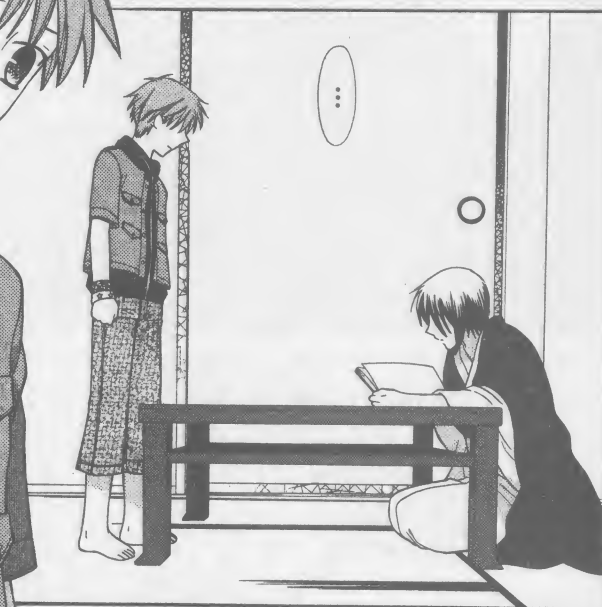
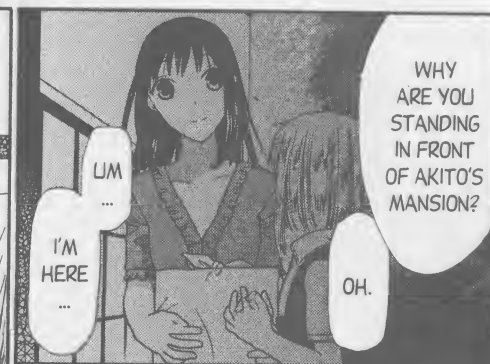
...HE
SMILED.



BECAUSE...







There aren't many columns (again) this volume...



He was hard to draw, yet easy to draw.

Kureno

- Kureno, his father, and his mother make his a family of three.
- Since becoming an adult, he hasn't interacted with his parents much.
- And ever since he became the first one to become normal, he avoided interacting with the other members of the Zodiac.
- He may have been the most lonely of all.
- When he first showed up (when he met Uo-chan for the first time at the convenience store), he was holding a lot of bags of snacks because Akito suddenly said she wanted to eat them late at night--so he'd gone to buy them.
- I'm ashamed to say it, but I couldn't make the time to explain that reason in the main story....
- Come to think of it, how does everyone pronounce "Kureno"? With me, it changes whenever I say it.
- Sometimes I'll accent it the same way I do "Momiiji," and sometimes it's the same as "Shigure."



WHEN?

YEAH...AT THE MAIN HOUSE.

NEXT WEEK.



HE'S...

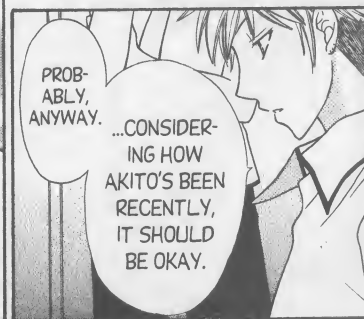
...CHANGED.



BUT ...

I DUNNO.

I WONDER WHAT HE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT.



PROBABLY, ANYWAY.

...CONSIDERING HOW AKITO'S BEEN RECENTLY, IT SHOULD BE OKAY.



HE WANTS TO TALK?

AKITO WANTS TO TALK?

YEAH.



HE SAYS HE WANTS ALL THE ZODIAC TOGETHER.



UH...

AND THAT INCLUDES ME?



I NEVER...

...DISLIKED THAT ABOUT YOU.



YOU'RE REALLY NOT PULLING YOUR PUNCHES THESE DAYS, ARE YOU?

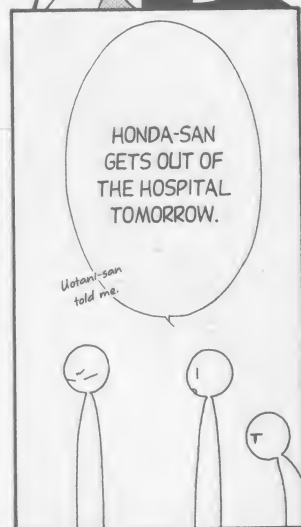
RIGHT-- I FORGOT.

HEARING THE STUPID VOICE OF AN IDIOT REMINDED ME.

WHAT? WHAT ABOUT SHIGURE?

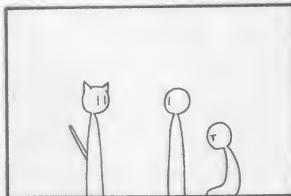
NO, I MEAN...

OH.



HONDA-SAN GETS OUT OF THE HOSPITAL TOMORROW.

Wotani-san told me.



THEY SAY TEASING'S A SIGN OF LOVE.

I'M SORRY.

I'M REALLY SORRY.

FORGET IT--JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU REMEMBERED ALREADY!



YEAH, KIND OF.

...VINDICATING.



...HOW'S SENSEI?

YOU MEAN SHIGURE?

HE'S BEEN OUT OF THE HOUSE A LOT LATELY.

STILL

IS HE...

...FIGHTING THESE THINGS BY HIMSELF?



AAAH... ♪

AH?!

...AAAH?



SINCE ALL THAT CRAZY CRAP THE OTHER DAY...

...HE'S BEEN FIGHTING A LOT OF STUFF.

THE "INSIDE" PEOPLE LOOK CONFUSED TOO.

IT'S KINDA...

THOSE TWO...

I DON'T
KNOW.

...ARE VERY LUCKY.

STAMP
STAMP

OKAY--I KNOW
NOW! I KNOW
SHE'S GETTING
OUT!

STAMP
STAMP

SO NOW IT'S
OKAY, RIGHT?!

WHEEZE
GASP
WHEEZE

IT'S OKAY,
RIGHT?!

MAN,
YOU'RE
ANNOYING!
YEAH, IT'S
FINE.

BUT!

THAT'S
NO FUN.

THE PRINCE
TOLD YOU
ALREADY?

IT'S OKAY FOR
ME TO GO PICK
HER UP?!



BY THE
WAY.

Snickers
snicker
snicker

I'M SORRY.

I'M REALLY
SORRY.

YOU ONLY
REMEMBERED
NOW?!



I WONDER
IF THAT
MEANS
HE'LL BE
A LITTLE
FREE.

AND IF HE
CAN BE WITH
HONDA-SAN.



I HEAR
THEY'RE
GONNA
DESTROY...

...THE
ISOLATED
ROOM.

I'M JEALOUS.

STUDENT
COUNCIL ROOM

I mean,
she
thinks
you
dumped
her...

...SHE MIGHT NOT
WEAR WHAT
WE GET HER.

IF SHE
FOUND OUT
YOU PICKED
IT OUT ...

MY, HOW
TERRIBLE.

... NNH.
IT'S...OKAY.
I'LL MAKE
AN EFFORT.

THEN
MAKE
SOME
EFFORT
NOW.

WHAT DO
YOU THINK'LL
LOOK GOOD ON
HER, KYON?

WHAT?
CLOTHES?

I mean,
she does
think you
dumped
her and
all...

YOU CAN'T
GET UPSET IF
SHE RUNS AWAY
FROM YOU.

OF THE
TWO OF
THEM.

PRESIDENT.

HERE.

I
FINISHED
DOING
THE
TOTALS.

PRESIDENT?

THIS IS
SUPPOSED
TO BE ONE
OF THE
THINGS
MEN ARE
GOOD FOR.

THEY'RE
BOTH
FINE.

HEY,
HEEEY.

MAYBE WE
SHOULDN'T
DO THIS.

YOU KINDA
SOUND
LIKE AN
OLD MAN.

What?
REALITY.

I...DON'T
REALLY
KNOW
ABOUT...

WE THOUGHT
WE'D GET HER
A PRESENT TO
CELEBRATE
HER GETTING
BETTER.

UH...

women's
clothes.



...THAT SHE
MAY OR MAY
NOT ACCEPT.

...THEN I HAVE
TO TELL HER
THE ONE THING...

I HAVE TO
TELL HER.

IF I WANT TO STAY
WITH HER...

ARE YOU
GOING TO
HOLD A
BANQUET?

SO
WHAT'S
YOUR
PLAN?

I KNOW
YOU'RE
COLLECTING
EVERYONE.

HAVE YOU
SEEN KIMI'S
BRUSH?

WHAT
ABOUT
YOU,
YUN-
YUN?

HAVE
YOU
SEEN
IT?

EH, YOU
PROBABLY
JUST
FORGOT IT
AT HOME.

BUT I ALWAYS
CARRY THAT
BRUSH
WITH ME.

HEY,
MACHI!
HAVE YOU
SEEN IT
ANY--

NO.

NOT
ONCE.

I
HAVEN'T.

Aw!
Then
where
is it?

I...



IF IT
MEANS I'LL
BE FREE...

...FROM
YOUR BAD
BEHAVIOR...

...THEN
I WILL BE
RELIEVED.

...LEAVE
ME AND GO
WHEREVER
YOU PLEASE.

YOU'LL BE
RELEASED
FROM ME.

YOU CAN
JUST...



BUT THAT
FIERY
TEMPER OF
YOURS WON'T
BE CURED
OVERNIGHT.

I SAID
I'VE HAD
ENOUGH
OF--

I'M NOT
"LOOKING
DOWN"
ON YOU.



...EVERYONE
LOOKING
DOWN ON ME
ANYMORE.



I'VE HAD
IT WITH
THIS.

I DON'T
WANT...



HM.

WELL, AS
LONG AS
YOU'RE
SATISFIED.



THAT'S
WHAT'S
MOST
IMPORTANT,
AFTER ALL.



...HEY.

YOU'RE
RELIEVED LIKE
THE REST
OF THEM,
AREN'T YOU?



"I'M...

...FREE."

I'M GOING
TO "END"
IT.

I'LL SAY...

"FROM
THE
CURSE."

...THE THINGS
I SHOULD.

ALL
OF IT.

"..."



AND
HERE.



A GIFT.

I GUESS
YOU COULD
CALL IT A
FAREWELL
PRESENT.



I'M
TEASING
YOU.

BE SURE
NOT TO GET
THOSE TWO
CONFUSED.





I HAVE
SOME-
THING...

...IMPORTANT
TO DO
MYSELF.



WHAT
ABOUT
YOU?

I'LL
PASS.



I'M SURE YOU
DON'T WANT ME
GETTING IN THE
WAY OF YOUR
LONG-AWAITED
REUNION.

BE-
SIDES.

I
DON'T--

RIGHT.

WHATEVER
YOU SAY.



JUST BE
YOURSELF.
YOUR STUPID,
NORMAL
SELF.

Don't
screw this
up, yeah?

Anyway



FOR SOME
REASON, I DON'T
REALLY KNOW
ANYMORE.

MAN.

WHAT
WAS BEING
NORMAL
LIKE?

BE
'NORMAL.'

I
JUST...

HOW DID
I ALWAYS
USED TO
TALK TO
HER?

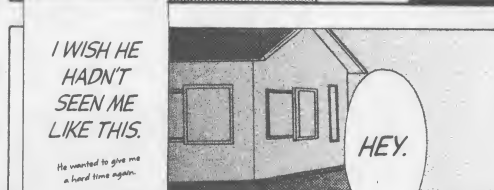
AND
MORE
THAN
ANY-
THING...



I'M
FREAKING
OUT MORE
BY THE
SECOND.

UNLESS...
I'M NERVOUS
BECAUSE
I FINALLY
GET TO
SEE HER?

THIS IS
BAD.



I WISH HE
HADN'T
SEEN ME
LIKE THIS.

He wanted to give me
a hard time again.

HEY.



...I SAID,
'HEY'!

BWA?!

TWITCH

SHOULDN'T
YOU BE
GOING
SOON?

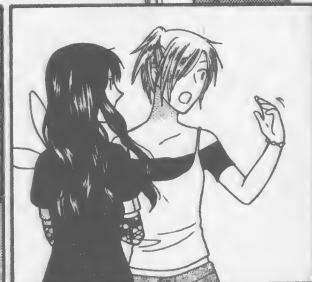
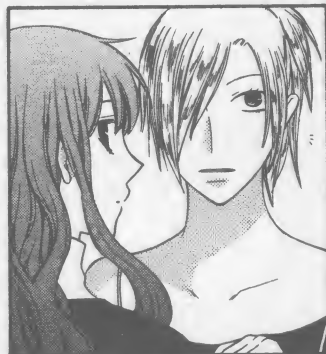
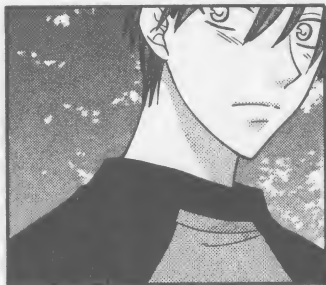
I THOUGH
YOU WERE
GOING TO GET
HONDA-SAN
TODAY.



FOR SOME
REASON...

...I'M
INSANELY
NERVOUS.

AND WHEN
I FINALLY
GET TO
SEE HER.
CRAP!



RIGHT
NOW, DO I
REALLY...

...STILL
LIKE HER?

WHAT
DO I LIKE
ABOUT
HER?



AND WHAT
DO I LIKE
ABOUT THAT?

HOW MUCH
DO I LIKE IT?



AND
WHAT
ABOUT...
ME?



...WILL
SHE STILL
ACCEPT ME?

SO MUCH
STUFF HAS
HAPPENED
RECENTLY.

AND SHE
THINKS
I DUMPED
HER.



I LOVE
HER.

I LOVE
HER.

MAN.

NONE OF
THAT...

...OH.

...REALLY
MATTERS
AT ALL.

...TO
LOVE
HER.

I LOVE HER...

...SO MUCH.





...

THE HELL...?

I COULD DIE...



...I REALLY WANT YOU...
...TO HEAR.
MACHI...

I COULD DIE.



GOOD MORNING.

HI.

MACHI?



...TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING TODAY?

UM, HEY.

CAN I...



YEAH.

IT WON'T TAKE LONG.



THERE'S SOMETHING...



SORRY FOR THE SUDDEN CALL.

WERE YOU ASLEEP?

...

YEAH...



I WON'T LET HER GET AWAY THIS TIME.



...I WAS GOING TO SMILE.

TOHRU...

WHEN
I SAW
HIM...

ONE
MORE
TIME...

...T...



IT'S
ALL...

I CAN'T
DO IT.

ONCE I
UNDER-
STOOD
THAT...

...FOR ME
TO DO.

I KNOW
THAT.

THERE'S
NOTHING
LEFT...

IT'S
ALL...

...OVER.



A a a a a h h h...

Was he
dum-
ped?

I think
so.

Did she
dump
you?

THIS
IS DE-
PRESS-
ING.

DAMMIT.

BUT IT'S
NO USE.



...SORRY
HE...



IS...!

YOU'RE
IN HERE
BECAUSE
YOU HIT
YOUR HEAD!

Really hard!

S-STOP
DOING
THAT! HEY!

I'M SORRY!



YES! THANK
YOU VERY
MUCH!

AND
PLEASE,
DON'T BE
SHY.

JUST LET ME
KNOW IF YOU
NEED ANYTHING
ELSE.

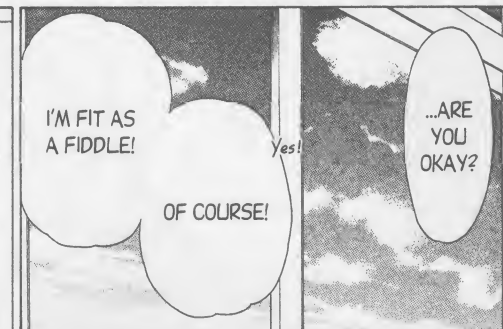
...THEN
I...



WE
SHOULD
TALK
ABOUT
KYO.

UM...

HE'S...



I'M FIT AS
A FIDDLE!

OF COURSE!

...ARE
YOU
OKAY?



ACTUALLY
...



I CAN'T...

...BE LIKE THIS.



I'LL ONLY TROUBLE THEM.

I CAN'T KEEP...

...HESITATING.



EVERYONE...

AND NOT LETTING GO.

...AND KYO-KUN.



"I'M DISILLUSIONED."

... HURTS.

IT HURTS.

THE SOUND OF HIS NAME...

...IS LIKE A KNIFE IN MY HEART.



IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT AT HOME?

IS THE LAUNDRY PILING UP?!

HOW IS... THE CLEANING...



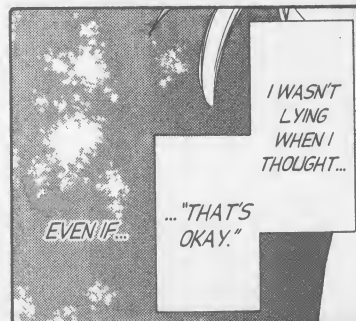
MY CHEST...





REALLY.

I CAN'T DO
ANYTHING
RIGHT.



I WASN'T
LYING
WHEN I
THOUGHT...

EVEN IF...

... "THAT'S
OKAY."

...A
WASTED
EFFORT.



へたり

IT
WAS
ALL...

IT
DOESN'T
MATTER.



...BY HIS SIDE.

...I'M NOT...



BUT...

I WASN'T
GOING TO
LET IT
BOTHER
ME.

I MADE A
DECISION.



SMILE...!

DON'T
FORGET.

WHEN
YOU SEE
HIM ONE
MORE
TIME...



...TRAINED
MYSELF.

OR I...
THOUGHT
I DID.

I
EVEN...

... YOU
HAVE TO
SMILE.



I CAN'T DO
THAT, NO
MATTER
WHAT.

SMILE

J-JUST A
LITTLE.

I CAN'T
CONTROL IT.

NOT REALLY.

PLEASE
...

...WAIT.

STOP
CRYING!

I DON'T
WANT
TO BE A
BURDEN.

I DON'T
WANT
HIM TO
HATE ME.

STOP!

SOON.

SOON,
I'LL...

STOP!

I DON'T WANT HIM...

NOT BEING WITH HIM...

...BREAKS
MY HEART.

IT BREAKS
MY HEART.

P...

I WANT TO BE
BY HIS SIDE.



...ALL
OF YOUR
FEELINGS.

I WAS ONLY
THINKING
OF MY OWN
REGRETS.

I WASN'T
CONTROLLING
WHAT CAME
OUT OF MY
MOUTH.

I COM-
PLETELY
IGNORED...



...DOESN'T
ALWAYS
GIVE YOU
THAT LAST
CHANCE TO
APOLOGIZE.

...SHOULD'VE
KNOWN THAT
THIS WORLD...

I SHOULD'VE
KNOWN
BETTER.

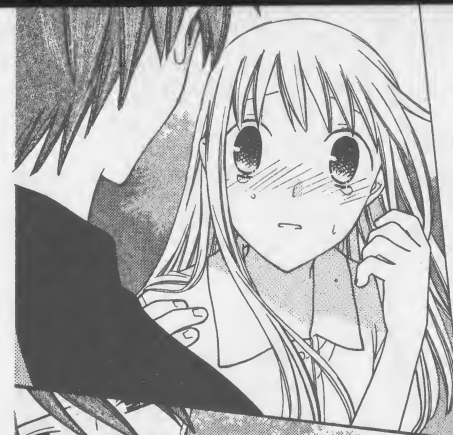
ME, OF ALL
PEOPLE...

THAT WOULD
BE LIKE...

I CAN'T LET
THAT SAME
THING HAPPEN
AGAIN.

I CAN'T.

...I NEVER DID
LEARN.



...TO BE
DISILLUSIONED
ANYMORE.



...

LOOK.



I WAS
ONLY...

...THINKING
ABOUT
MYSELF.





LISTEN
TO ME.

IF I'M
GONNA
KEEP
LIVING...

...I WANT
IT TO BE
WITH YOU.

I DON'T
WANT
ANYONE
ELSE.

...TO BE
WITH YOU.

I
WANT...



THIS
CAN BE
THE
LAST
TIME.

FOR
MAKING
YOU
CRY.

I'M
SORRY.

B--

I DON'T
NEED
ANOTHER
ONE.

JUST
GIVE ME
THIS.

I HURT
YOU A
LOT.

I'M
SORRY.

WILL YOU
GIVE ME
ONE LAST
CHANCE?

THIS...

...IS THE
LAST
TIME.



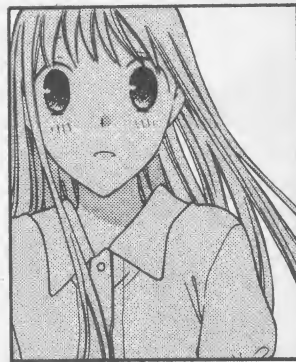
MMMMNGH-!


AND NOW...

AND NOW...

H-C...

TENS OF TIMES.





...IS
INVINCIBLE.


AND THAT
FEELING...

OKAY,
KYO-
KUN?

I REALLY,
REALLY
DO.



HEH
HEH!




I'LL LOSE
HUMAN
FORM
AFTER-
WARD.

I KNOW.

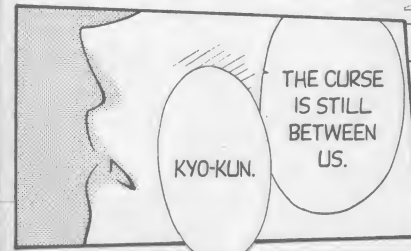
...HOLD
YOU?

CAN I...




...I'M SURE
THERE'LL
BE TIMES
THAT I'LL
MAKE YOU
SUFFER.

IF WE'RE
TOGETHER...



THE CURSE
IS STILL
BETWEEN
US.

KYO-KUN.



...I REALLY DO
LOVE YOU.

DIDN'T YOU
KNOW?

KYO-
KUN...



THERE'S
NOTHING
FOR ME
TO BE
SCARED
OF.



RIGHT?



...I'M
INVINCIBLE
TOO.

THEN I
GUESS
...

UH...
REALLY?



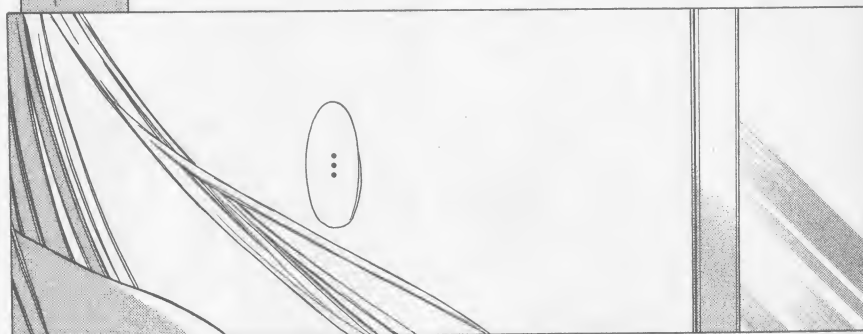
AS LONG AS I
HAVE YOU!



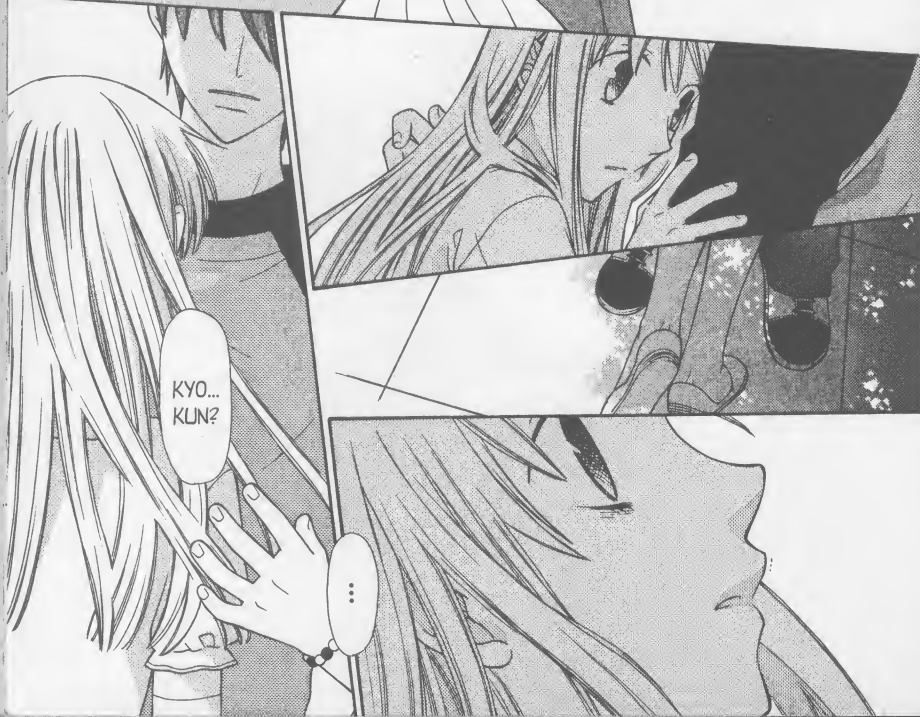


Chapter 130









IT'S...

...OKAY
NOW,
RIGHT...?

...

...OKAY.

IT'S...

FATHER.

I CAN
JUST
BE...ME.

I DON'T
HAVE TO
BE "GOD"
ANYMORE.

... "SPECIAL"
ANYMORE.

I DON'T
HAVE...

...TO BE...

RIGHT...?



GOODBYE.

IT...



GOODBYE.

I KNOW
WHAT
I DON'T
HAVE.

I KNOW
I DON'T
HAVE
ANYTHING
REDEEMING
ABOUT ME,
BUT...!

...

I CAN
START
DOWN...

...MY
OWN
PATH.

I...

"I" AM...

SO
HURT.

SO
SCARED!







WH...

WHAT'S
WRONG?!

RITSU?
!

ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?!
YOU'RE NOT
HURT, ARE
YOU?!

GOOD-
BYE.

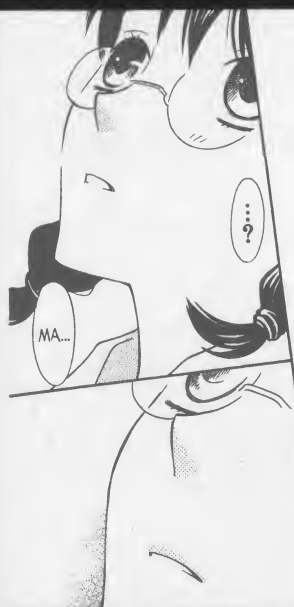
EVERY
ONE



AND
NOW...

...I CAN
FINALLY
TELL YOU
THAT.

© 2004 GENEON



MA...



MI-
NE.




...TO LOVE
YOU.

I WISHED...

I WAS
BORN
FOR A
REASON.





"BEGINNINGS
HAPPEN BECAUSE
THERE ARE
ENDINGS."



"PARTINGS ARE THE
BEGINNINGS OF NEW
MEETINGS."



NO.

NOT NOW.



I DON'T WANT
TO HEAR...



VERY
LONELY.



IT'S
LONELY
TO SAY
GOODBYE.





MAYBE THERE'S
NOTHING WE CAN
DO ABOUT THIS.

BUT AT LEAST,
FOR NOW...



PLEASE.

CRY WITH
ME.



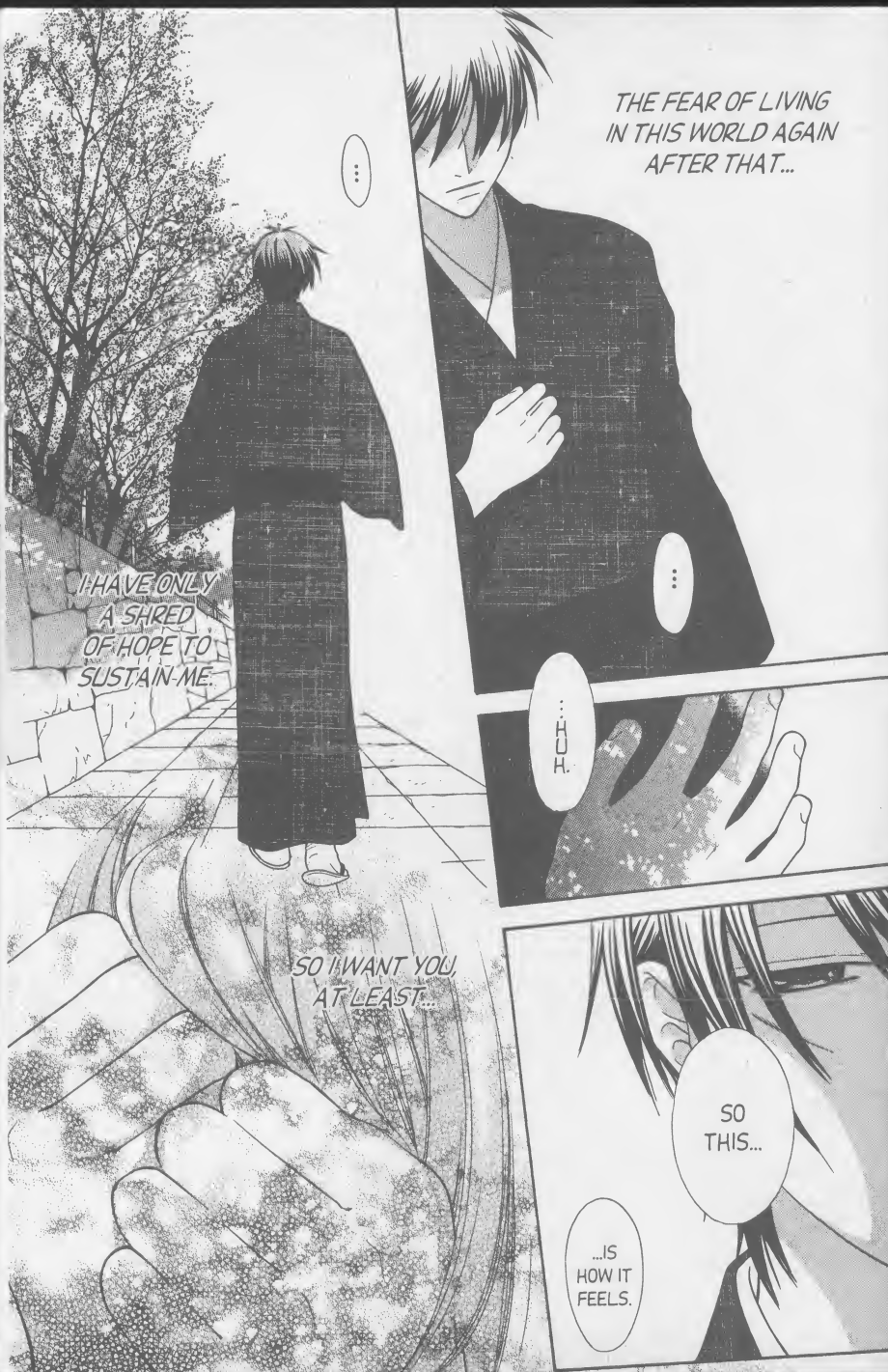
...THOSE SIMPLE
CLICHES.



...THIS IS
PRETTY
DEPRESSING.

HUNH.

IN A
WAY...



THE FEAR OF LIVING
IN THIS WORLD AGAIN
AFTER THAT...

...

I HAVE ONLY
A SHRED
OF HOPE TO
SUSTAIN ME.

...H.H.

SO I WANT YOU
AT LEAST...

SO
THIS...

...IS
HOW IT
FEELS.



...CRY
WITH ME.

LIKE YOUR
ENTIRE BODY...

LIKE IT'S RAGING
AGAINST THE
WORLD.

...IS SCREAMING
AT THE SKY.

I LOST SOMETHING.

AND I DON'T HAVE A
SINGLE GUARANTEE.

LIKE THE DAY YOU WERE FIRST
BORN INTO THIS WORLD.

...TO CRY.

CRY.

CRY WITH
ME.

...TO BELIEVE IN THEM
AFTER THE FACT.

YOU
NEVER
GIVE UP,
DO YOU?

"MEETINGS."

"BEGINNINGS."

IT'S NOT TOO LATE...

BUT
DESPITE
ALL THAT,
AKITO-SAN.

...THAT I
CAN BE
YOUR
FRIEND.

PLEASE?

I STILL
HOPE...

...TO BECOME
"FRIENDS"



...WEIRD,
SOMEHOW.

....

I
FEEL...

HUH?



I'M SORRY
FOR MAKING
YOU WAIT.

I-I'M
SORRY!

I'M
LATE,
AREN'T
I?

MAYBE
I'M JUST
NERVOUS?

BUT...

PRESIDENT!



SMILE.

PRESIDENT!

THANK YOU.

FOR KEEPING...

PRES...

IS SOME-
THING
WRONG?

PRESI-
DENT?

...THE VERY DISTANT...

...PROMISE.

PRESI-
DENT?

THANK YOU.

YOU SAID
IT WAS
IMPORTANT,
SO...

IT'S FINE.

I'M
SORRY
FOR THE
SHORT
NOTICE.

THERE'S
SOMETHING
I HAVE TO...

YEAH.

...TELL...

YOU'RE THE LAST.

IT'S OKAY--
YOU'RE
NOT LATE.

DID YOU
RUN
HERE?

Huh?
NO!
I DIDN'T...
RUN.

Chapter 131

BUT THE
PERSON WAS
STILL ALONE.

AFTER LEAVING
THE MOUNTAIN...

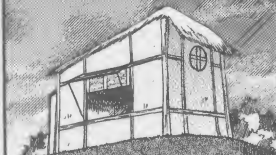
...THIS PERSON
LEARNED THAT
MANY, MANY PEOPLE
LIVED BELOW IT.

THE
PERSON
WAS
ALONE.

ONCE UPON A TIME,
IN A PARTICULAR
PLACE...

...THERE LIVED
A PERSON.

FOR A
LONG,
LONG
TIME.



AND GOODBYE.

ONE DAY...

...A CAT
CAME TO
VISIT.



THE PERSON WAS
BEWILDERED
BY THE SUDDEN
VISITOR.

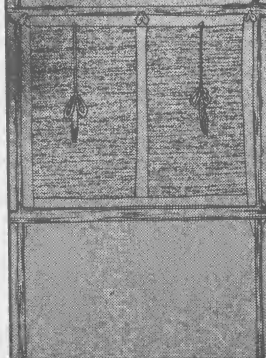


THE CAT BOWED HIS
HEAD REVERENTLY.



"I HAVE
HUMBLY
WATCHED YOU
FOR A LONG
TIME," HE SAID.

...THE PERSON
WAS AFRAID...



...OF BEING DIFFERENT
FROM OTHERS.

AND THUS...

...DEVELOPED A
FEAR OF OTHER
PEOPLE.

A FEAR OF
GETTING HURT.

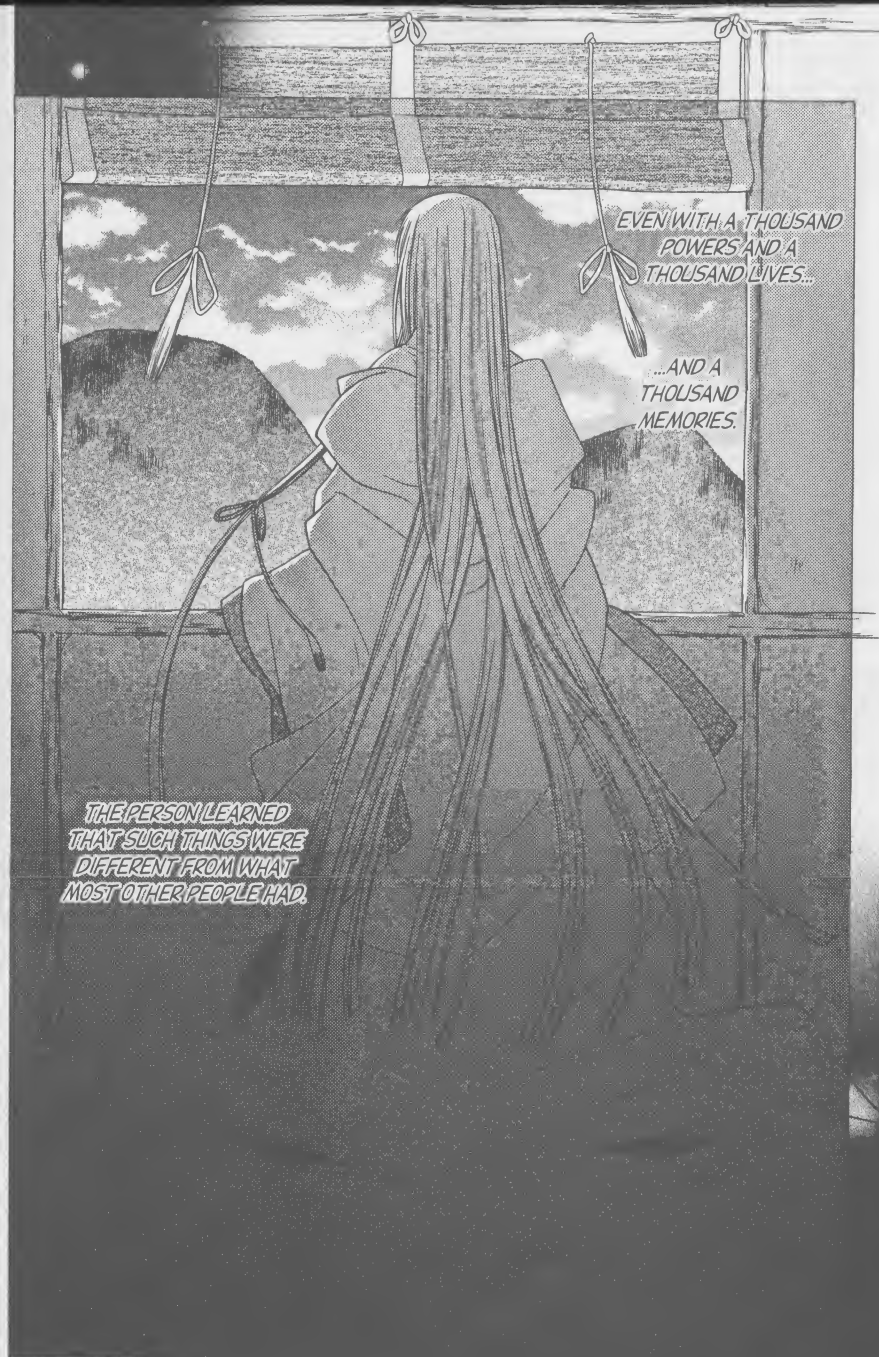


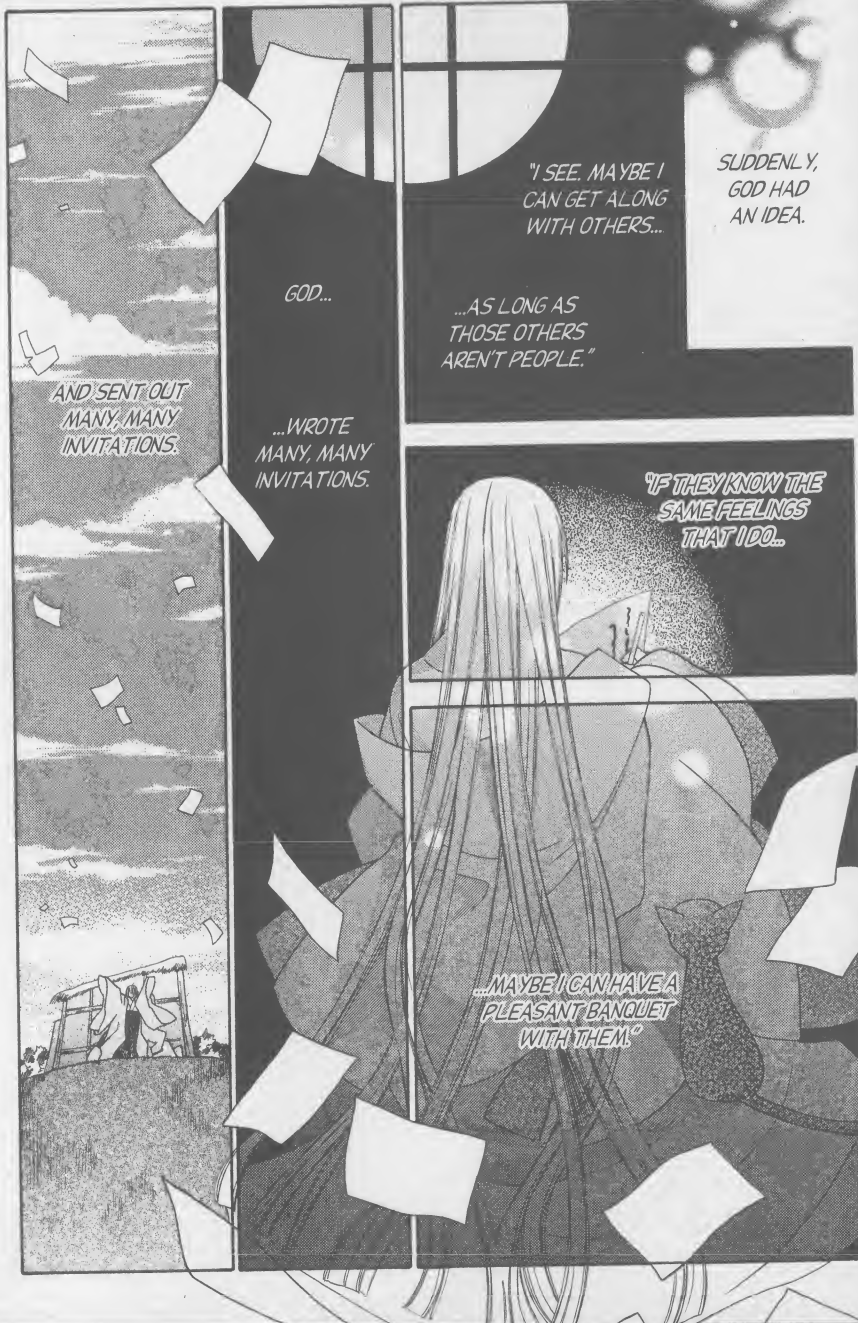
DESPITE HAVING
MANY POWERS...

EVEN WITH A THOUSAND
POWERS AND A
THOUSAND LIVES...

...AND A
THOUSAND
MEMORIES.

THE PERSON LEARNED
THAT SUCH THINGS WERE
DIFFERENT FROM WHAT
MOST OTHER PEOPLE HAD.





"I SEE. MAYBE I
CAN GET ALONG
WITH OTHERS...

SUDDENLY,
GOD HAD
AN IDEA.

GOD...

...AS LONG AS
THOSE OTHERS
AREN'T PEOPLE."

AND SENT OUT
MANY, MANY
INVITATIONS.

...WROTE
MANY, MANY
INVITATIONS.

"IF THEY KNOW THE
SAME FEELINGS
THAT I DO..."

...MAYBE I CAN HAVE A
PLEASANT BANQUET
WITH THEM."

"I AM MERELY
A STRAY CAT..."

"I CANNOT STOP BEING
ATTRACTED TO YOU!"

...BUT PLEASE LET ME
BE BY YOUR SIDE."



FROM THAT TIME ON...

"PLEASE,
LORD GOD."



AND THAT MADE GOD
VERY, VERY HAPPY.



NOT EVEN FOR
A MOMENT.



...THE CAT KEPT
HIS PROMISE.

HE NEVER LEFT
GOD'S SIDE.

BUT ONE NIGHT...

...THE CAT COLLAPSED.



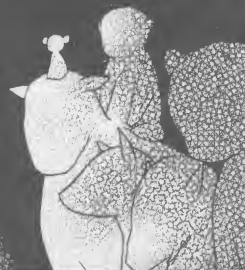
NOTHING COULD
BE DONE.

HIS LIFE HAD
RUN OUT.



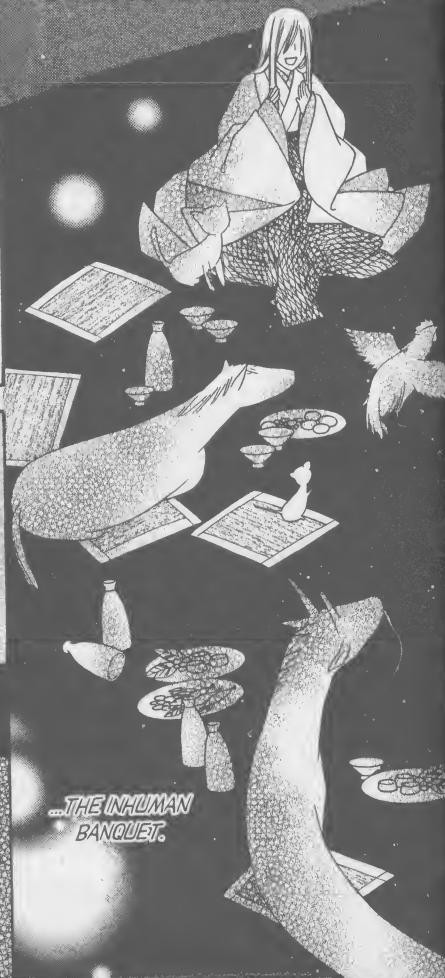
THEY ALL
CRIED.

IT MADE
THEM
REALIZE...



AND GOD, TOO, LAUGHED
OUT LOUD FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

THE MOON QUIETLY
WATCHED OVER...

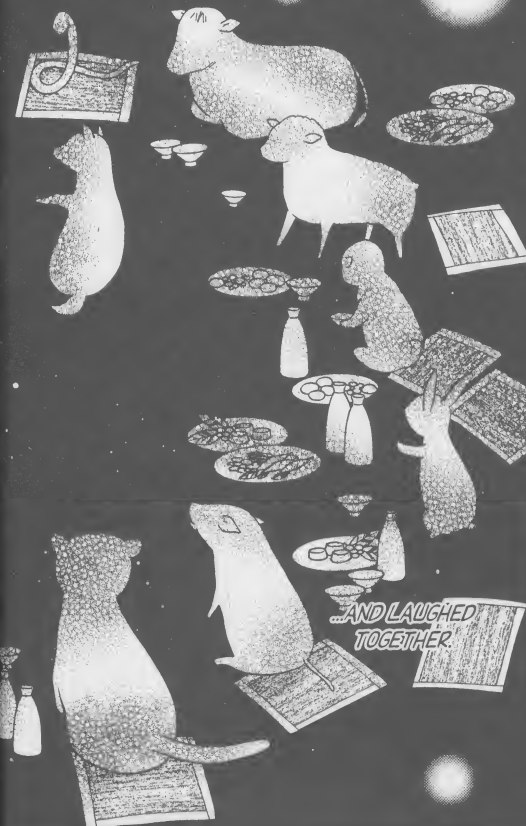


...THE INHUMAN
BANQUET.

GOD WAS THUS
SURROUNDED
BY THIRTEEN
ANIMALS IN ALL.

THEY ALL HELD A
BANQUET EVERY NIGHT
THE MOON SPARKLED.

THEY SANG, AND DANCED...



...AND LAUGHED
TOGETHER.

AS A RESULT...



...TWELVE ANIMALS
CAME TO SEE GOD.



"WE WILL ALL
BE FRIENDS."

"UNTIL THE END
OF TIME."

"WE WILL BE
PERMANENT."

"HOWEVER
MANY TIMES
WE DIE."

"HOWEVER
MANY TIMES
WE ARE
REBORN."

"OUR
COUNTLESS
BANQUETS"

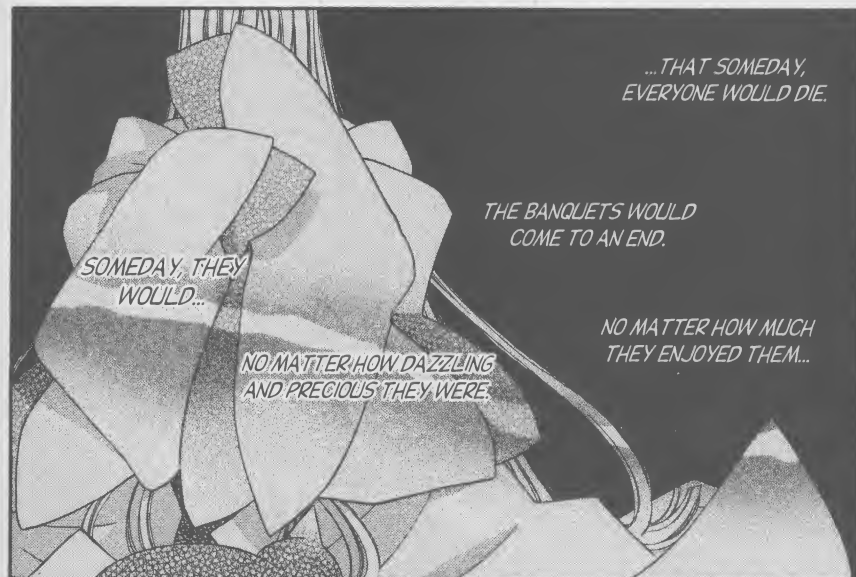
"JUST AS
BEFORE"

"EVEN IF FOR
ALL OF YOU DIE
AND ROT AWAY."

"WE WILL
HAVE..."

"WE WILL BE TIED
TOGETHER BY AN
ETERNAL BOND."

"I WILL NOW
MAKE IT
ETERNAL."



...THAT SOMEDAY,
EVERYONE WOULD DIE.

THE BANQUETS WOULD
COME TO AN END.

SOMEDAY, THEY
WOULD...

NO MATTER HOW DAZZLING
AND PRECIOUS THEY WERE.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH
THEY ENJOYED THEM...



AND DREW A
CIRCLE ON A
SAKE CUP.

...A SINGLE CHANT.

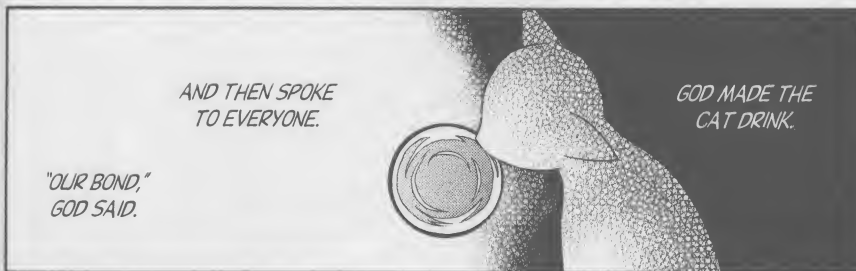
GOD RECITED...



AND THEN SPOKE
TO EVERYONE.

"OUR BOND,"
GOD SAID.

GOD MADE THE
CAT DRINK.





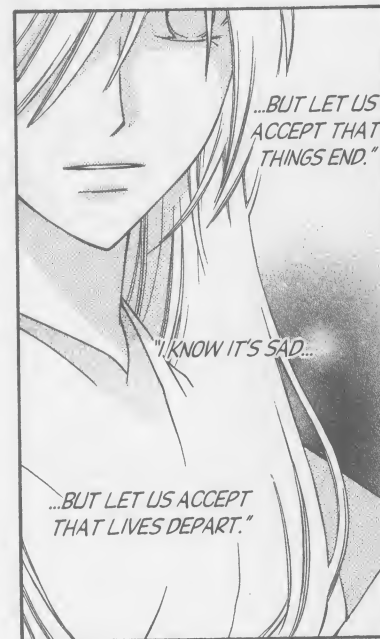
IT DEVASTATED
THEM.

THEY SCOLDED
AND ADMONISHED
THE CAT.



EVEN SO, THE
CAT SPOKE.

"MY LORD GOD, MY
LORD GOD. I KNOW
IT'S FRIGHTENING..."



...BUT LET US
ACCEPT THAT
THINGS END."

"I KNOW IT'S SAD..."

...BUT LET US ACCEPT
THAT LIVES DEPART."

TO GOD
AND THE
OTHERS...

...THEY
WERE
WORDS OF
REJECTION.

THOSE WORDS...



...WERE
UNEXPECTED.

"I DON'T NEED
PERMANENCE."

ALL IN ORDER...

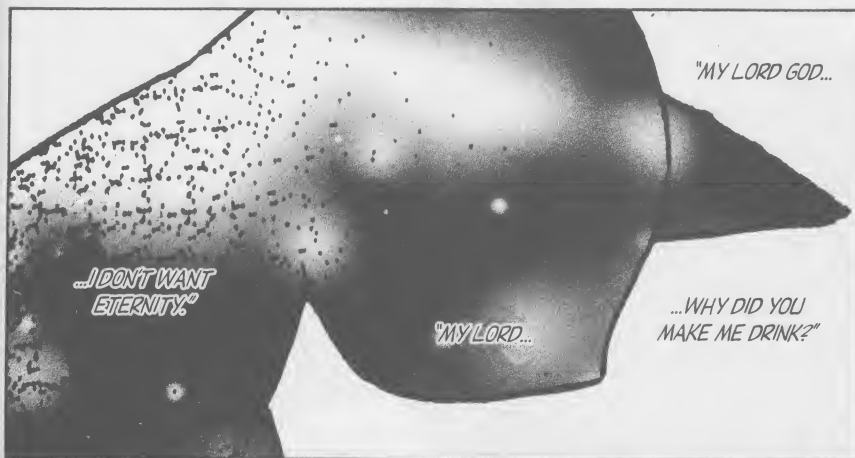
...THEY SHARED THE
DRINK OF THEIR VOW.



"MY LORD GOD."

...THE CAT STARTED
TO CRY, HIS
BREATH FAINT.

WHEN FINALLY
THE BOAR DRANK...



"MY LORD GOD..."

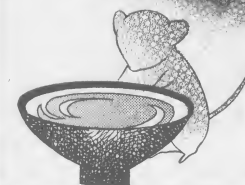
"I DON'T WANT
ETERNITY."

"MY LORD..."

...WHY DID YOU
MAKE ME DRINK?"

EVERYONE NODDED
EMPHATICALLY.

THE RAT WAS THE
FIRST TO DRINK.



NEXT,
THE OX.

NEXT, THE
TIGER.

NEXT, THE
RABBIT.

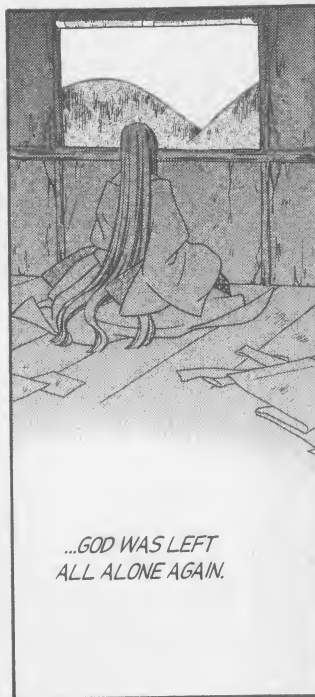


SOME TIME
AFTER THAT
ONE AFTER
ANOTHER...

...THE
OTHERS
DIED.



FINALLY,
AFTER THE
DRAGON DIED...



...GOD WAS LEFT
ALL ALONE AGAIN.

THEY WERE
FILLED
WITH THE
SENSE
THAT THE
CAT HAD
BETRAYED
THEM.



BUT NO ONE CARED ABOUT
THE CAT ANYMORE.

THE CAT
TWITCHED
HIS TAIL ONE
LAST TIME
AND DIED.



"NEXT TIME
I DON'T WANT TO
MEET YOU WITH
ONLY THOSE
OF US HERE"

"MY LORD GOD,
I KNOW IT WAS
ONLY FOR A
SHORT TIME"

"...I DON'T WANT TO
ONLY SEE YOU IN
THE MOONLIGHT."

"BUT I WAS
HAPPY TO BE
WITH YOU."

"I WANT TO MEET
YOU WHILE
YOU'RE SMILING..."

"IF ONE MORE
TIME..."

"...WE BOTH
DIE AND ARE
REBORN..."

"...WITHIN A RING
OF PEOPLE."

"I WANT TO SEE
YOU SMILING UNDER
THE LIGHT OF THE
SUN AS WELL."

"...AND IF WE
MEET AGAIN..."



EVERYONE
HAS FOR-
GOTTEN...

...THEIR FIRST
MEMORIES.

...FROM
LONG,
LONG
AGO.

THEIR FIRST
PROMISE.

...BUT EVERYONE
IS WAITING ON
THE OTHER
SIDE OF OUR
PROMISE."

NOW IT'S
A TALE...



"WE'LL HOLD OUR
BANQUETS."

"ONCE AGAIN..."

...AND AS MANY TIMES
AS WE WANT."

"FOR AS LONG AS
WE WISH."

"WITHOUT CHANGING."

"I MAY BE SAD AND
ALONE NOW..."



AND THEN
ANOTHER
DAY CAME.

A DAY WHEN
EVEN GOD DIED.

BUT GOD
WASN'T
AFRAID.

BECAUSE GOD
WAS SUPPORTED
BY THE PROMISE
MADE WITH
THE OTHERS.

"AGAIN."

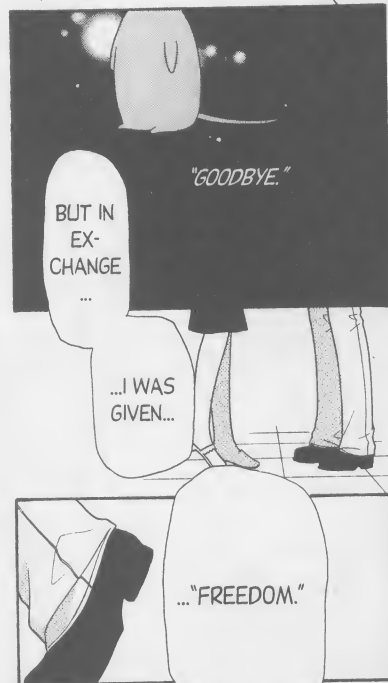


IT'S NOT...
FAIR OF
ME TO BE
LIKE THIS.

DAMMIT.

BUT
NOW...

...THAT
WE'RE
APART...



"GOODBYE."

BUT IN
EX-
CHANGE
...

...I WAS
GIVEN...

... "FREEDOM."



...NO.

I
WON'T.

I'M
SURE
OF IT.



UM.

YOU
WON'T
EVER...

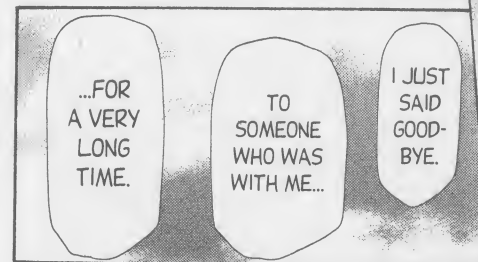
...SEE THIS
PERSON
AGAIN?



S-SORRY.

SORRY FOR
SUDDENLY
...

IT'S
JUST...



...FOR
A VERY
LONG
TIME.

TO
SOMEONE
WHO WAS
WITH ME...

I JUST
SAID
GOOD-
BYE.




IT WAS
MORE
LIKE A
BURDEN
THAN A
BLESSING.

BEING
TOGETHER
WAS
REALLY...
DIFFICULT.

WE WERE
TOGETHER,
BUT...



PRESI-
DENT
...?



RIGHT NOW,
THIS IS
ENOUGH.

BUT
WHATEVER.



WAIT.

THERE'S
SOME
THING...

...I
WANTED
...

WHAT?

...TO ASK
YOU TOO.

ER...

I...

ACTU-
ALLY...



I'M
SORRY.

...TO TELL
YOU.

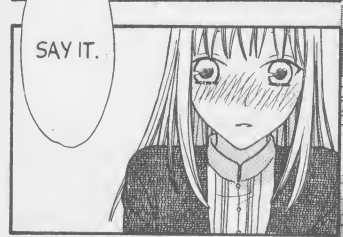
...WHAT
I WANTED...

THIS ISN'T
EXACTLY...

I'M NOT
MAKING
ANY
SENSE,
AM I?

YOU
MUST
BE CON-
FUSED.







AT WHAT
POINT...

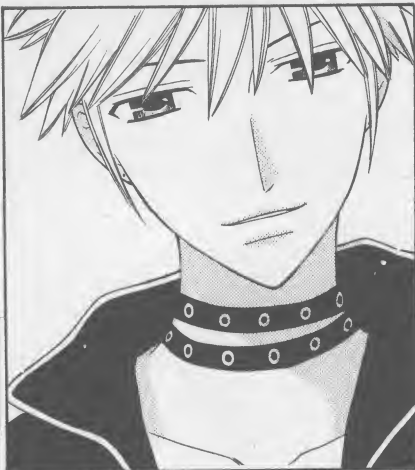
...DID IT
BECOME
A CURSE?



AS MANY
TIMES AS
YOU WANT.

THAT
FIRST...

...PROMISE.



WHEN DID IT
CHANGE...

THOSE DAYS THAT
WERE SO HAPPY.

THE DAYS THAT
WERE SO HARD
TO PART WITH.



...INTO A BURDEN?



...TO ALL
OF YOU...

...WHO CONTINUED
TO SHOULDER
THAT EXHAUSTED
PROMISE...

BUT...

THE PROMISE
THAT LOST ITS
ORIGINAL FORM.

THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING I WANT TO
TELL YOU...

I'M SORRY.

I'M SORRY.

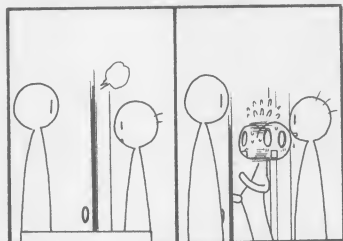
...SUPPOSED TO
BE LOVE THERE.

THERE
WAS...

TIME PASSED.

AND IT
BECAME
NOTHING
BUT PAIN.

PEOPLE CHANGED.



A STORY
OF LONG,
LONG AGO.

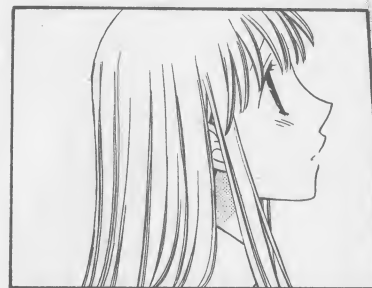
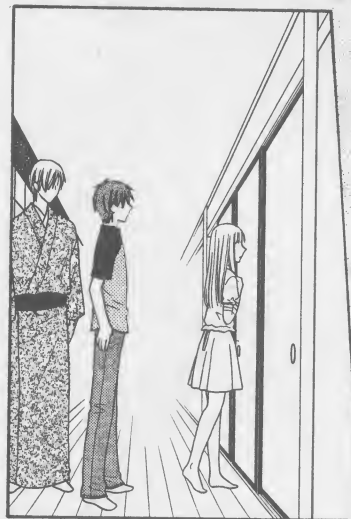


THE FIRST
MEMORIES
THAT
EVERYONE
FORGOT.

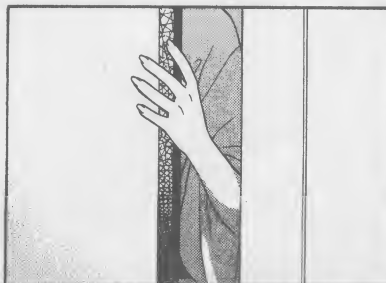


IT WASN'T
UNTIL
MUCH...

...MUCH...



THANK YOU.



...IS
THANK
YOU.

*I feel so
grateful!*

*Harada-sama, Araki-sama,
Mother-sama, Editor-sama
And everyone who reads and
supports this manga.*

And lastly, to you know who.

This has been Natsuki Takaya.



*...MUCH
LATER...*

*...THAT
THE CAT'S
WISH WAS
FINALLY
GRANTED.*

To Be Concluded in Volume 23

Fans Basket

Fans Basket is back thanks to awesome intern Stephanie Trautwein from Los Angeles. She picked out a great batch of art to highlight and wrote some inspired comments. Thanks for all your help, Stephanie! And of course, thanks to all the fans who keep sending us their wonderful work. To properly thank you all, we are sending out postcards to all of you who provided addresses. And to those who we couldn't reach, please know that we appreciate you so much. Thank you for helping make Fruits Basket the phenomenon that it is!

And so we can continue to appreciate all the great fan art you guys provide, TOKYOPOP is starting something new. From now on, please do NOT send any more fan art to our office. Huh? What? Relax! What we want instead is for you to upload the images to our website! This way, everyone can appreciate your work even after volume 23 is published. Check the end of this section for exactly what to do. Fruits Basket Forever!

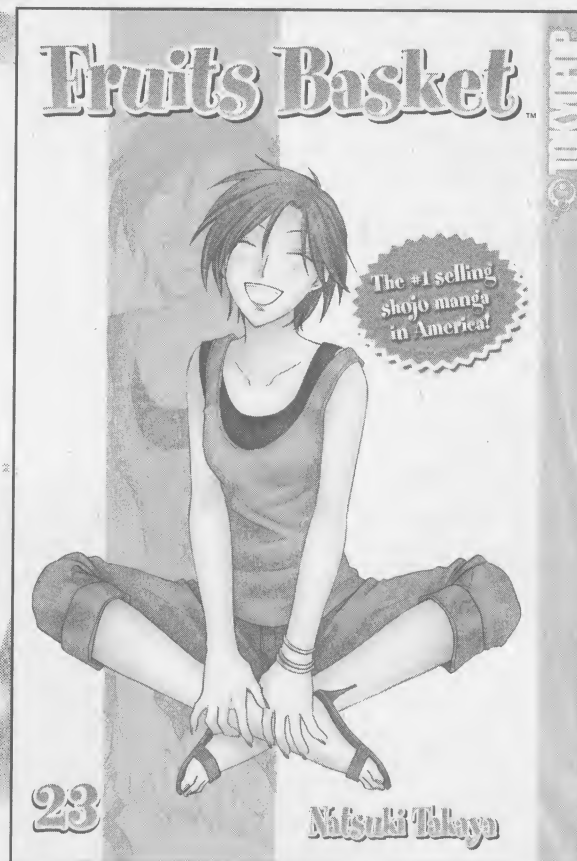
- Alexis Kirseh, Editor



Jessica Lin
Age 13
Lexington, MA

I have to tell you, I wish I could draw this well when I was thirteen—or even now, for that matter! This artwork is so darling; Akito and Yuki's hair is shaped with great grace and the eyes, especially Yuki's, show great emotion. The question on Yuki's right side begs to be thought about. Is it love or is it hate? I do not think I understand the answer yet—do you?

Next time in...



The Journey's End...

Curses have broken and the eternal banquet has finally come to a close. But there are still some loose ends to be wrapped up before the last page of Fruits Basket arrives! How will each of the members of the Zodiac deal with their newfound freedom? Can forgiveness come in the wake of Akito's past actions, and a new surprising revelation?

Fruits Basket Volume 23
Available July 2009

Angele Salonga
Age 17
Na'alehu, Hawaii

Hana, Tohru and Uo look so sophisticated and beautiful in these original pieces by Angele. I love especially the details in Hana's skirt and Tohru's neckpiece. Tohru's face is also very sweet as well, and I enjoy the fact that this is not the quintessential Furuba style.



Danah Macaraig
Age 17
Pomona, NY

Wouldn't it be so nice to take a stroll underneath the cherry blossoms on a breezy spring day? Tohru looks so peaceful here, with her cute hair ties blowing in the breeze. She is holding a daffodil's petal—perhaps to ask if the one she loves, loves her back. "He loves me, he loves me not..."

Thank you so much for all the fan art you have sent in! We have received thousands of wonderful pieces over the years. But from now on, please upload them to the TOKYOPOP website. Go to <http://www.tokyopop.com/fansbasket> for more info!

